

THE TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE

ROD SERLING'S

JUNE 1981 / \$2

ALL-NEW TALES
OF SUSPENSE,
HORROR AND
THE SUPERNATURAL
IN THE TRADITION
OF THE CLASSIC
TELEVISION SERIES

ROBERT BLOCH
TALKS ABOUT HIS
SEQUEL TO 'PSYCHO'

10 ORIGINAL STORIES
ABOUT ALIENS, GHOSTS,
NIGHTMARES, FATE, AND
THE END OF THE WORLD

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SUPERNATURAL TALES
BY ANTHONY BOUCHER

COLOR FILM PREVIEW:
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CLASSIC SERLING
'TWILIGHT ZONE'
TV SCRIPT:
'THE AFTER HOURS'

100 YEARS OF
FANTASY ILLUSTRATION

THEODORE STURGEON
ON BOOKS

GAHAN WILSON
ON MOVIES

SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE
TO TV'S 'TWILIGHT ZONE'

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STORY CONTEST

STEPHEN KING'S
NEW THRILLER
'THE JAUNT'



ROD SERLING'S THE TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE

Cover art by Darrelyn Wood

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Stephen King



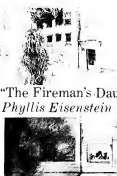
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An exceedingly wide range . . .



King



Eisenstein



Ryan



Alterman



Kittredge



Gilden

Prospective writers are usually advised to familiarize themselves with their potential markets. "Just read the magazine!" the editors cry, too busy to issue lists of "guidelines" and "story needs." Anyone reading this issue of TZ with such concerns in mind will discover that our range is exceedingly wide: scientific horrors in 23rd-century America and supernatural encounters in 12th-century Japan; *psi* powers in the big city and dream research in small-town New England; demons from hell, creatures out of myth, and ghosts on the back roads and highways. Plus an extremely enticing vampire, and a peek at the apocalypse from a candy store in the Bronx.

The scientific horrors come from **STEPHEN KING**, and no one could serve them up better. *The Jaunt* is, in some ways, a rather humorous story, but its premise is, in fact, one of the most fiendishly horrifying notions ever invented, ranking with those visions of doom made famous by Jonathan Edwards.

"When I was a boy, I read William F. Temple's 'The Four-Sided Triangle,'" says King, "and ever since then I've wanted to do a story on teleportation"—a subject which, along with the tale's futuristic setting, makes *The Jaunt* something of a departure for him. King's next novel will be a thriller called *Cujo*, due this September from Viking. His most recent book, just out from Everest House, is *Danse Macabre*, a nonfiction study of supernatural horror in literature and the media. It contains, among a wealth of other things, some perceptive observations on H. P. Lovecraft, the Providence-born fantasist who's been a source of inspiration to King and many other modern writers—among them **ROBERT BLOCH**, the engaging subject of this month's TZ Interview. Bloch corresponded with Lovecraft, received early encouragement from him, and—as "Robert Blake"—was made the doomed hero of Lovecraft's

tale "The Haunter of the Dark."

Lovecraft has also been an abiding interest of **TOM COLLINS**, our interviewer, whose book *A Winter Wish* collects Lovecraft's previously unpublished verse. Collins is a writer and researcher based in Manhattan, and keeps very busy indeed. Some years back I wrote of him, "Though still in his twenties, Tom has the air of a comfortable old British clubman; portly, walrus-moustached, and blessed with a mind as precise as a pocket watch, he's my personal choice to play Mycroft Holmes." He's now in his thirties, but is otherwise blessedly unchanged.

"I will maintain to the death that the only true horror is that of understatement," **ANTHONY BOUCHER** wrote, "and it annoys me, as a theorist, that both Poe and Lovecraft managed to attain horror by explicit overstatement." Boucher—the pen name for William A. P. White, who died in 1968 at the age of fifty-seven—termed Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos series "one of the extraordinary imaginative achievements of our times," but added: "I am basically an M. R. James man."

Appropriately, echoes of James's cozy fireside atmosphere can be found in *The Way I Heard It*, one of the two Boucher short-stories printed in this issue. Both stories (as well as the remarks quoted above) first appeared in long-age issues of an amateur magazine called *The Acolyte*, to which Boucher was a frequent contributor. He is best remembered, though, as the much-respected mystery critic of the *New York Times Book Review*, a post he held from 1949 until his death, and as a president of the Mystery Writers of America. Today mystery fans meet in his honor at an annual convention called the Bouchercon.

PHYLLIS EISENSTEIN, represented here by *The Fireman's Daughter*, is author of the recent, highly acclaimed Arkham House novel *Born to Exile*. She herself was born in

Chicago and, except for two years in Germany and one winter in upper Michigan as an Air Force wife, has spent her life in that city. Now a full-time writer, she's returned to college after a hiatus of a dozen years and is finishing her bachelor's degree in anthropology. Her fourth novel, *In the Hands of Glory*, will be published soon by Pocket Books.

ALAN RYAN's first novel, *Panther!*, has just been published by New American Library. His second, *The Kill*, is due from Ballantine early next year. Since his first story was published in mid-1978, he's had stories in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Amazing*, *New Dimensions*, *Shadows*, *The Year's Best Horror Stories*, and other anthologies, and is currently editing an anthology of his own for Warner Books: *Perpetual Light*, a collection of "speculative fiction dealing with the religious experience." Ryan was a 1980 nominee for the John W. Campbell Award, and his quietly moving story printed here, *Waiting for the Papers*, should place him in contention for a Hugo or a Nebula.

PETER S. ALTERMAN, who contributes the haunting *Scenerunner* and the *Silver Lady*, writes both fiction and literary criticism; asked for some brief biographical data, he noted that he's a medical editor and writer for the National Center for Health Care Technology near Washington, D.C., and that his most recent work has been the novelette "Binding Energy" in *New Dimensions 9* and essays on artificial intelligence, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Samuel R. Delany. He added, by way of postscript, "Didn't even mention my cute face or my kitten: how's that for res raint?"

No such hesitation from **MARY KITTREDGE**, whose disturbing story *The Dream shattering* is, amazingly, her first professionally published fiction. When we asked her for an account of her background, she gave it to us no-holds-barred: "Mary

Books

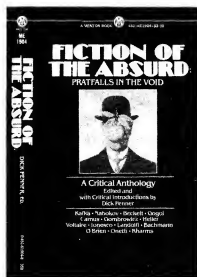
by Theodore Sturgeon

Very special reading: Probably the greatest unsung giant among us is Katharine Maclean. Her *The Trouble With You Earth People* (Donning, \$4.95) has just fallen into my hands. I gobbled it up, then exploded with enthusiasm to everyone I met . . . and was astounded to see the blank looks and the "Who's she?" responses. Maclean is a scientist, and it shows. She is a loving and compassionate thinker, and it shows. She is a brilliant and highly original writer who writes only when she has something important to say, something which tells us important things about ourselves and our species—which may account for her too-short bibliography. This beautiful paperback, lovingly edited by Polly and Kelly Freas, with Freas illustrations, contains a dozen examples of Maclean, dating from 1951 to the present. Of special notice is her unforgettable *Origin of Species*. Because Donning is a small publisher, and because I want you to be able to find this book, I depart from usual practice and give you their address: 5041 Admiral Wright Road, Virginia Beach, VA 23462.

Michael Bishop's *Transfigurations* (Berkley, \$2.25) is as complex, as carefully thought-out, and as compelling an sf novel as you'll find anywhere, ever. The anthropological "detective story" of the origins of the Asadi, shambling hominids of the planet Bosk'veld; the ingenious search for clues; the unfolding of the unpredictable answers—all will have you transfixed.

At long last I have read two books which you surely know about by now: Norman Spinrad's *Songs From the Stars* (Pocket Books, \$2.50) and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Beginning Place*. Both are unequivocally recommended, the Spinrad for its power and for its marvelous melding of plot and real feeling, the Le Guin for its lapidary prose and for the dread and beauty of its concepts. It's the kind of fantasy, I'm sure, that lived so urgently in Rod Serling's heart.

A wonderful oddity is *Fiction of the Absurd*, subtitled *Pratfalls in the Void*, edited by Dick Penner (New American Library, \$3.50). With succinct introductions by the editor, it gives you convolutions of logic and unreason by Kafka, Nabokov, Gogol, Beckett, Camus, Voltaire, and others; it zooms into sardonic and hilarious and provocative fantasies that most pure fantasists wouldn't—couldn't—dream of.



The Heroics are with us in force this time. Eric van Lustbader's *Shadows of Night* is now in paperback (Berkley, \$2.50). In *The Wall of Years* (Dell, \$2.75), Andrew M. Stephenson takes a twenty-sixth-century time traveler back to the ninth to swing a sword amongst the Anglo-Saxons. I think he's done a lot of homework. And since Heroics are not always expressed in swords and sorcery but in blasts, zaps, and time-twists, we have F. M. Busby's Barton battling the Demu in *Cage a Man*, *The Proud Enemy*, and a third and brand new novel, *End of the Line*, in a single huge volume, *The Demu Trilogy* (Pocket Books, \$2.50).

We have *Find the Changeling* by Gregory Benford and Gordon Eklund (Dell, \$2.50), wherein two mismatched heroes pursue a promethean enemy; I found the premise incredible but enjoyed the chase. Jerry Pournelle's Garrett goes through the Pournellian *Birth of Fire* (Pocket Books, \$2.25) complete with resurrection, revolution, social commentary, and battle. Richard Cowper has a sturdy Englishman and his beautiful companion chasing the most villainous villain since Wo Fat from slums to laboratories, through Switzerland, Paris, and his own childhood, in *Time Out of Mind* (Pocket Books, \$2.25). In *Firebird* (Pocket Books, \$2.25), Charles L. Harness's hero and beautiful companion tackle nothing less than the destruction and re-creation of entire universes—overlooking, it seems to me, that bigger is not necessarily better, and that to pile wonder upon wonder can cause the collapse of wonder. "Your reader is eager to believe one impossible thing," said the late great Fletcher Pratt. "Don't give him ten." Especially don't give him a dozen. In books of this sort, the hero always wins, and you know that from the start. Paul Preuss, for example, has an interesting hero—or maybe it's "heroes." They flick back and forth through possibilities and (yet again) are out to save a universe. The book is called *Re-entry* (Bantam, \$2.25); it's swift and ingenious. And Brian Stableford's Remy, in *Optimum* (DAW, \$1.95), injects himself into a three-, or four-, or four-and-a-half-part war game situation among humans and three varieties of native, plus the optimum himself. Personally, I like the scholarly, subtle Stableford rather better than this kind of intellectualized mayhem.

Now do you know what I mean by Heroics?

We come now to some novels which don't depend on the rubber-stamped blurb. "His alone was the secret which could destroy the planet/galaxy/universe." (You know up front he's going to save it all.) Such blurbs, or

versions of them, have become as common on the book racks as the picture of a maiden in reduced circumstances, with a ruined castle in the background displaying one lighted window.

Michael Moorcock is an English writer who can turn out planet-busters with one hand while, with the other, producing truly seminal, thought-provoking metaphorical fantasies. *The Golden Barge* (DAW, \$1.75) is such a tale, and I recommend it. Pierre Barbet's *Cosmic Crusaders* (DAW, \$2.25) is really two novels, *Baphomet's Tomb* and *Stellar Crusade*, and they are wonderful, wild patchworks of sf and historical drama: Marco Polo in Machiavellian intrigues throughout the cosmos. You don't believe a word of it, and that in itself is a delight. Bernard Kay's and C. J. Cherryh's fluid translations from the French display the same qualities that have made Barbet so popular in his country.

Clifford Simak is back at his very best (reread *City* if you want to know what I mean by that) in *Project Pope* (Ballantine, \$10.95). His humanity, his sagacity, and his gentle humor show throughout; it's a lovely book. Poul Anderson surprised me with *The Devil's Game* (Pocket Books, \$2.50): no clashing armor nor steel-shod hooves striking sparks from frozen rocks this time, but an absolutely contemporary mystery tale roughly on the plan of Christie's *Ten Little Indians*. It slides in as fantasy because of a deal-with-the-devil element which I think, if eliminated, would change the thrust of the novel not one bit. What remains is an engaging book; Anderson doesn't know how to tell a story badly.

Harry Harrison's *Wheelworld* (Bantam, \$2.25) is, I suppose, a Heroic after all; I put it here because of my pleasure in discovering that it is not in the category of his *Rat* novels, whose broad lampooning of sf I always feel will drive the curious novice away from the field forever. *Wheelworld* is Book II of his trilogy *To the Stars*, and is a hard-driving adventure tale with some highly inventive and believable off-Earth effects. Edward Levy's *Came a Spider* (Berkley, \$2.50) is manifestly a quickie to cash in on the current rash of maybe-a-movie horror books, and is sf to the extent that Levy has done a certain amount of homework about spiders. Don't bother.

Richard Jaccoma's *Yellow Peril*

(Berkley, \$2.95), subtitled *The Adventures of Sir John Weymouth Smith*, has a jacket that proclaims: "Erotic Adventure in the outrageous style of the original 'pulp'." This is a flat untruth. The original pulps ran to a certain amount of violence, but the only sex in them was on their lurid covers. Imitating rather badly the style of the 1890s, and telling his story through the hackneyed image of an Empire-building British secret operative, Jaccoma looses a flood of brain-spattered walls and sado-masochism, all presented in cold-bloodedly chauvinist style. If you find this on a shelf with fantasy and sf, put it with the hardcore porn where it belongs. But don't buy it.

PROJECT POPE



On a much pleasanter note, look for the paperback of Elizabeth A. Lynn's *A Different Light* (Berkley, \$2.25), which, if I'm not mistaken, is her first novel. The sexual thread of this narrative is strong, but it has feeling; it has the strength and tenderness and yearning that a true love story needs. *Chronalysis* by Michel Jeury (Macmillan, \$10.95), translated by Maxim Jakubowski, is a bewildering alternate-alternate-alternate universe story, playing fascinating hob with time, reality, and personal identity. It won a prize as the best science fiction novel of the year in France, and it's easy to see why. The writing is beautiful, with a wondrous sensuality to the images—which (a personal note) is why I wrote the introduction to it.

Still speaking personally, there's a bio-interview of Sturgeon by Paul (Crawdaddy) Williams in *The Berkley Showcase, Volume 3* (Berkley, \$2.25). It leaves me spluttering "But-but Paul! All that was four years ago!"—because a lot has happened to me since then. Otherwise, it's either all true or it gives me a hell of a lot to work up to. The book itself is a very nice potpourri of different writers and styles: Thurston, Salmonson, Disch, Dann, and others. Except for the Piers Anthony, whose sadistic tale really need never have been written, I found the collection a joy.

Isaac Asimov and Martin Greenberg have reached #1—and 1942—in their series *The Great SF Stories* (DAW, \$2.50). The interesting introduction tells what else was going on that year, and then each story—all of them very well selected—has a rubric by each of the editors. The entire set will be a landmark when it's done.

The Best of John Sladek (Pocket Books, \$2.50) is a collection of this English wildman's outrageous, hilarious sf fantasies, plus some parodies of other sf authors. I have a warning which you may not need, but which people like me really do, and badly. It goes back to an early addiction to Thorpe Smith, when I read seven of his novels without stopping and then was suddenly so overloaded that I couldn't get near them for the next twenty years. Read Sladek in small bits with slices of time between them, and you'll extract the best of all of it.

Attention! There's a new Philip K. Dick novel called *Valis* (Bantam, \$2.25), and it is of light reading. Maybe it's neither sf nor fantasy. It's certainly not mainstream, and for the author's sake that's too bad, for there is not another writer like this anywhere. He is his own category. *Valis* is a carefully structured, profoundly thoughtful study of some crazy people who just might have touched something illimitable, something so deep-rooted in myth and religion that it is literally unspicable. There is no way to describe or even to review this book with any accuracy; all one can do is to turn you loose on it with the injunction that it will give itself to you to the exact degree that you are able to give to it. 12

Screen

by Gahan Wilson

The Formula (United Artists)
Directed by John G. Avildsen
Screenplay by Steve Shagan

Scanners (Avco Embassy)
Written and directed
by David Cronenberg

It would seem there has come upon the citizens of this land of ours a growing conviction that their little lives are less and less their own, that the control of their lives is falling increasingly into others' hands, and that there is nothing any of them can do to slow the process down, not to mention stop it.

This is a strange thing to have happen to what used to be a nation of go-getters—a country which, in living memory, took pride in being packed with positive thinkers, fellows and gals who knew that with luck and luck and a little of the old Moxie, they could fight their way straight to the top.

Perhaps it's merely a kind of inversion, a flopping over from one simple-minded view of life to another. Then again, perhaps the John Does out there have hit upon a shared realization that they're really mere pawns in someone else's game, helpless puppets danced by others' strings, altogether bossed and programmed by manipulators far cleverer and stronger than themselves, poor sumps.

Two films have arrived which are eager to exploit this group insight or illusion to the hilt, one coming on as fact only thinly disguised as a moving picture, the other trying to beat us into complete paranoia with any club it can get its hands on.

The first is *The Formula*, and I wish ever so much I could brush aside its basic contention with a little more ease than I seem able to muster. The idea is that the Nazis worked out a simple, inexpensive formula to convert coal to oil, that this formula was snatched up and hidden by unscrupulous types after World War II, and that they have continued to keep it from us so that they may sell us regular oil at ever-increasing prices until it runs out. Then, and *only* then, will they use the formula to make phony oil. At ever-increasing prices, of course.

Needless to say, this idea has a strong appeal because (1) wouldn't it be

grand if all our economic problems were entirely created by a tiny band of villains? Because then, hopefully, they could be taken out and shot. And (2) if there were such a formula, there wouldn't be any more of this dumb stuff about oil, and America would be number one again! It's hard to resist.

The leader of the tiny band of villains in *The Formula* is Adam Steiffel. He's played by Marlon Brando, and whatever other flaws and strengths the film may have, this alone makes seeing it a must.

There have been grand American tycoon villains—consider Edward Arnold!—but never before, I think, has one been brought off so well as Adam Steiffel.

Consider his clothes alone. The costume designer, Bill Thomas, should really get some kind of special Oscar for those clothes—suits of costly fabric expensively tailored to bind at the crotch, to reveal the pot belly, and to rumple at the armpit. And his California poolside gear with its underpinning of long Johns is perfection. Then Joe McCarthy, the hair stylist, should get another Oscar for Steiffel's horrible haircut, and Russell Goble, the property master, should get another for the ornate box in which Steiffel keeps his office Milk Duds.

But of course, none of it would have come to life without Brando, fat, nose-rubbing, throat-clearing Brando, with a Midwestern accent never before approached by Hollywood, and as nice a kit of folksy, bullying tactics as ever was assembled.

Unfortunately, this really super villain does not have anything like the hero he deserves to do him battle. George C. Scott plays his

opposition—a tough cop pulled into extraordinary international intrigue—in a mechanical fashion which is tolerable when set against lesser members of the cast but infuriating when contrasted with Brando. Why, you wonder, did a really excellent bravura talent like Scott sleepwalk through those Brando scenes? The interplay *should* have been sensational, but there is none. The effect is oddly like those television interviews where a less famous reporter asks the questions, is edited out and replaced by the star, and you have a conversation taking place between two people who never saw each other in their lives.

Anyhow, Scott wanders dazedly over most of Europe, trying to solve a couple of California murders while slowly learning about instant gas—a gruff, simple American faced with seeds of furtive, fancy European types.

Some of the foreigners he encounters are well done. Richard Lynch is nice as a mean German general who gets even nastier with age; John Gielgud is kind of disappointing as the sinister scientist who invented the formula; Marthe Keller is a bit of confusing casting, since she plays an extremely young girl who we're supposed to be surprised to see sexually involved with old George Scott, but we aren't because she isn't; and G. D. Spalding plays an oil company executive convincingly, perhaps because he is an oil company executive.

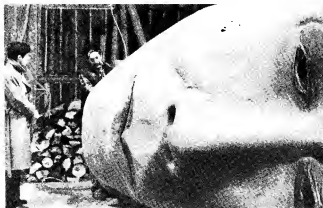
But all this is neither here nor there, pish tosh to it. Go and see *The Formula* on account of Marlon Brando and his Adam Steiffel. You'll never smile at a gas station attendant again.

The thing is, Brian DePalma did that

"... a conversation between two people who never saw each other in their lives."

Detective Barney Caine (George C. Scott) confronts oil tycoon Adam Steiffel (Marlon Brando) in *The Formula*.





"...with the possible exception of a deranged artist." On the trail of renegade "scanners," Lack comes upon an avant-garde sculptor (played by Robert Silverman) who claims that his grotesque creations are the only things that keep him sane.

"...telepathically linked to a monster computer." With Jennifer O'Neill offering encouragement, Stephen Lack—as *Scanners'* psychokinetic hero—drains a computer's memory banks via a telephone hookup.



already in *The Fury*. Didn't anyone see *The Fury*? It was a pretty cute movie about ESP types taking apart normal people who didn't understand them. Making them bleed, spinning them around in the air, stuff like that. The normal people were real stinkers (I'm surprised the film wasn't picketed by them), but the worst one was John Cassavetes, a real bastard, and in the end he got what he'd been asking for all along, the meanie, and everybody in the theater clapped happily, including me. He got blown to pieces, just like the people in *Scanners*.

The second movie to tell you that you have absolutely no say-so in your life is *Scanners*. It seems that from now on you will be the plaything of a group of evil mutants who are taking over the world. Judging from the reports in *Variety* on how very, very many of you are flocking to see it, that's the message that you want to hear.

Or maybe it's the head blowing up—the one in the movie's trailer, shown on television and elsewhere. *Blahp*, it goes. *Phlooiie!* Blood all over the place. Brains. Tiny bits of skull and strands of hair. A real mess.

I have nothing against taking someone else's theme and running with it, nothing at all. I *enjoy* clever variations on concepts developed by others. But—and it's a terribly important but—if you're going to do

that sort of thing, the idea is to *develop* it, *enrich* it; and *Scanners* doesn't. I kept waiting for the impact of the Cassavetes blowup to be topped, and they never even came close. There are lots of complications, mind, lots of elaborations—veins stand out and spurt blood, smoke curls from the chest—but that's only trimmings.

I did like the routine wherein an ESP type—a so-called "scanner"—is telepathically linked to a monster computer which, at the command of its operators, speedily reduces itself to rubble, even melting the telephone on which the scanner is talking to it. I think it's the most effective scene in the movie: because it didn't involve two people. There wasn't any try at human interaction, just this fellow staring pop-eyed at a phone smoking and melting in his hand.

The problem with all the other scenes is that the destruction (and the film is one battering after another, psychic or physical) takes place between two or more people; and though *Scanners* works up a terrific sweat trying to do it, it never manages to come up with a single credible human—with the possible exception of a deranged artist, who just maybe comes alive for a flash.

But all the other characters are totally comic-book. Never real at all. And the effect is odd, because some of

the actors involved have been exceptionally convincing in the past. Jennifer O'Neill, for example, was memorably real in *Summer of '42*. Here she is just a sort of abstraction, a plastic heroine running around out of breath from one shock scene to the next. And Patrick McGeehan, for God's sake, whose specialty has always been bringing extraordinary credibility to parts which would I have been unbelievably with out his talents—tv's *Secret Agent* and *The Prisoner*—plays a sinister scientist in *Scanners* so unconvincingly, so totally without any feel of someone actually living there behind the makeup, that I found myself seriously wondering if they'd hired the Disney people to build a McGeehan robot, like the one they made of Lincoln. I do hope, for his sake, that this is the case.

One fascinating thing I came across in the press release for *Scanners* is that someone once tried to hire their head stunt man, Alex Stevens, to jump off the Golden Gate Bridge. Stevens said sure, *if* he could do it in sequences—going from net to net, I assume. But the producers wanted the whole fall in one shot, so Stevens said no. Another fellow took the job and was killed.

I think Stevens's "no" means that we still have some control over our lives. I certainly hope so. **17**



Robert Bloch: Society as Insane Asylum

"Our society is getting more and more like an insane asylum that is ruled by therapists and authority figures who don't know what they're talking about."

T Z I N T E R V I E W

Interviewer **Tom Co lins** reports:

Robert Albert Bloch will forever be identified on dust jackets and advertising copy as "the author of *Psycho*" and will be remembered as the creator of Norman Bates, the motel owner—portrayed by Anthony Perkins in the legendary Alfred Hitchcock movie—who stabbed Janet Leigh to death in the shower. Even today, more than twenty years after that dazzling sequence became one of the most famous scenes ever recorded on film, people still tell Bloch that they're afraid to take a shower. His response: "I'm just glad I didn't have the victim on a toilet seat!" When a fan once asked him to autograph a glass shower stall with a marking pen, he wrote, "Warning—Dangerous When Wet."

This combination of humor and horror, of wordplay and sheer grue, make Bloch's writing unique. Although his first stories appeared in the celebrated pulp magazine *Weird Tales* and were heavily influenced by the work of H. P. Lovecraft, who encouraged him at the start of his career, he soon was writing for radio, tv, and film. Yet his early passion for detail, logic, consistency, and craftsmanship have stayed with him all his life.

Bloch was born in 1917 in Chicago—"at an early age," he might add—but moved with his family to Maywood, Illinois, at the age of five, and to Milwaukee five years after that. He was already haunting local libraries and educating himself outside of classrooms, something he continued to do after high school when he had to go to work, during the Depression, rather than to college. "Lovecraft was my university," he says, recalling his correspondence with the older

writer, as anyone who has read HPL's voluminous, polymathic letters can easily understand.

Bloch was a confirmed movie fan when, at the age of eight, he went alone for the first time to see a movie at night. "It is to the motion picture, I believe, that I owe my own interest in fantasy," he has noted. That particular evening he went to see Lon Chaney in *The Phantom of the Opera*. It provided, he says, "about two years of recurrent nightmares"—and, perhaps, a lifetime of inspiration.

In the early 1940s, Bloch began work for the Gustav Marx Agency in Milwaukee, writing advertising copy—a suitable alternative, no doubt, for someone who had by then experienced a brief career as a stand-up comic and gag writer for such radio figures as "Stoopnagle and Budd." Later he was asked to do a series of radio horror shows based on his own stories, which had begun to include not only macabre humor ("Time Wounds All Heels" is a typical early title), but also science fiction and—"having no shame at all anymore," he says—detective stories.

After *Psycho* was purchased, he had an opportunity to visit Hollywood as a scriptwriter for television (a chance unrelated to the film), and discovered he had a whole new career. His television work has included episodes for *Lock-Up*, Alfred Hitchcock Presents, *Thriller*, and *Rod Serling's Night Gallery*, along with three episodes of *Star Trek* and numerous other credits.

His film credits began when he took a treatment by Blake Edwards and turned it into a screenplay and novel called *The Couch*, a 1962 Warner Brothers film starring Shirley Knight and Grant Williams. It was

followed by *The Cabinet of Caligari* for Fox, also released in 1962, which starred Glynis Johns and Dan O'Herlihy. Then came *Strait-Jacket* (Columbia, 1964), directed by William Castle and starring Joan Crawford; *The Night Walker* (Universal 1965), another Castle film, starring Barbara Stanwyck; and numerous others—though what he wrote isn't necessarily what ended up on the screen.

But the anthology films are probably his most successful projects. Bloch wrote screenplays, based on his own short stories, for *Torture Garden* (Columbia, 1968), with Jack Palance, Burgess Meredith, and Peter Cushing; *The House That Dripped Blood* (Amicus, 1971), with Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee; and *Asylum* (Amicus, 1972), with Peter Cushing, Britt Ekland, and Charlotte Rampling—all produced in England. Here wit, taste, and good production values combined with good stories to produce what Bloch has always aimed for: entertainment.

He has been guest of honor at two World Science Fiction Conventions and has received numerous awards for his fiction and film career, including the first of the Life Achievement Awards given annually at the World Fantasy Convention. His reaction: "I haven't had so much fun since the rats ate my baby sister!" Coming after a beautiful and moving speech that had reduced some of the audience to speechlessness and others nearly to tears, that remark brought down the house.

Ladies and gentlemen—Robert Bloch.

TZ: I have several different kinds of questions...

Bloch: Start with the clean ones.

TZ: All right, let's try an obvious one. What originally inspired you to write *Psycho*?

Bloch: Actually, I was inspired by the Edward Gein case—but not by the mass murderer himself. I was inspired by the circumstances of the case, which were simple. I lived in a little town in Wisconsin, and thirty-nine miles away in Plainfield, a still-smaller community, this mass murder was unearthed quite by accident. I discovered he had lived there all his life and had been killing women, unbeknownst to the general population, who used him as a babysitter and who accepted gifts of liver from him during deer-hunting season—and later regretted it when they wondered whether or not they'd ever actually seen him bring in the carcass of a deer.

When I discovered all this, I merely contrasted it with my situation in the small town I lived in. It's very strange that anybody would be able to get away with this kind of double existence. In the community I resided in, there was a great deal of gossip and everybody knew everybody else's business.

TZ: You were living in Weyauwega, Wisconsin, while the story of the Gein case was actually breaking.

Bloch: Yes, but the story didn't break in any detail in Weyauwega, because small-town newspapers tend to steer clear of that sort of thing and much prefer to report on church socials. I got very limited information about the actual details of the crime, and I didn't get over to this little community because I had no wheels.

Immediately after reading about the case, I said, "There's a story here, there's got to be. Anyone who could get away with this sort of thing in a small town is a unique individual." I began to speculate on what kind of person this individual might be, and at once came up with the notion that he probably was a schizoid personality, and that it would be much more convincing if he himself wasn't aware of his own crimes, rather than have to go through elaborate efforts to conceal them knowingly.

From there I began to ask myself other questions. Where could this sort of thing possibly take place? I came up with a motel. Then it was purely a matter of selecting the victims and arranging for the *modus operandi*.

TZ: What happened to Gein?

Bloch: He's still alive and still in the state hospital for the criminally insane. I believe. He's supposed to be quite harmless in his dotage, and has applied several times for release.

TZ: In the novel you describe the shower scene like this:

"Mary started to scream, and then the curtains parted further and a hand appeared, holding a butcher knife. It was the knife that, a moment later, cut off her scream."

"And her head."

Bloch: A bit of business that I imagine Mr. Hitchcock could not employ in 1959, before the day of the spatter films.

TZ: I wonder if, in retrospect, you don't feel that that was overdoing it.

Bloch: I would, if I were expected to perform an actual demonstration. I'm sure it would be virtually impossible to remove someone's head in a shower with an ordinary knife. But as it was written, it was merely a snapper line to round off that particular chapter, and as a substitute for going into the so-called "gory details," which I thought were unnecessary. I wanted to shock without subjecting the reader to nauseating minutiae.

TZ: Yet you do sometimes go into those details. In your short story "The Last Performance," a man gropes around in the innards of his recently murdered wife.

It wasn't until some years later, when I was called upon to do a nonfiction account of the case for one of Anthony Boucher's Mystery Writers of America anthologies, *The Quality of Murder*, that I ran down some of the facts—and discovered, to my horror, that what I'd invented pretty well corresponded with the details of Gein's actual life. He did have a mother fixation, and he really *was* a transvestite. But he didn't dress up in women's clothing; he used the skin and cut-off breasts of women he had killed. There were some other details that were a little more harrowing and horrible than I had employed, but I came uncomfortably close to the truth, apparently.

Bloch: Only within the space of one or two sentences. Besides, it wasn't his wife—just a friend. I think that if this thing were filmed today—it was done, incidentally, as a *Hitchcock Hour* show for television, starring Franchot Tone—we would see the murder of the girl. We would see the



"... the same sweet, lovable, unspoiled boy that he always was."

Anthony Perkins as *Psycho*'s Norman Bates.

incisions being made. We would see the groping in close-up, and several other gruesome and, to me, disgusting details. I was content to alumnate this thing and put in just enough to let the reader's imagination do the job for itself. Today we would even see the organs being removed—in full color. In other words, we would see the victim become *dissected*.

TZ: I understand you don't like watching that sort of thing.

Bloch: Not only do I dislike watching it, I don't watch it.

TZ: How many times have you seen *Psycho*?

Bloch: I have seen *Psycho* twice of my own volition and countless times under duress. It was shown, for example, in France, when I appeared over there two years ago. It was shown more recently in some college over here, where I was lecturing to a seminar. It is considered impolite to walk out on one's own presentation.

TZ: How did you respond the first time you saw it? Were you squeamish?

Bloch: My first viewing of *Psycho* was when the rough cut was presented at Universal Studios for a small and select audience consisting of several of the technical crew. I sat in the row in front of three people—Alfred Hitchcock, Janet Leigh, and Bernard Hermann, who composed the score.

I was not squeamish. I was completely astonished by the degree to which he'd followed the book and had improved visually upon so many elements of the novel. I was also rather carried away by the fact that he'd been able to cast Anthony Perkins in the main role and come up with a

highly effective performance, whereas my own conception had been of a little man a dozen years older.

When the film was over, Hitch turned to Janet Leigh and I heard him say, "Well, what did you think?" And she said, "When the knife went into me up on the screen, I could feel it."

Afterwards, outside, was the first time I had any personal contact with Mr. Hitchcock. He asked me what I thought of the film. "It either will be your greatest success or your greatest disaster," I said. "I can't tell which. It will depend entirely on the audience."

Of course, in 1959 that was a fairly honest statement on my part. No one had ever been subjected to that particular type of suspense film before. There were films that had elements of suspense; I still think, for example, that the best film of that type was *Diabolique*. But it had only one moment of supreme impact, compared to the variety of moments that Hitch provided in *Psycho*.

TZ: When the film came out, the *New York Times* warned, "You had better have a pretty strong stomach." *Time* called it "murderously magnificent," but added that it contained "one of the messiest, most nauseating murders ever filmed."

Bloch: There are two interesting things in connection with those reviews. One is that several weeks later, Bosley Crowther wrote a second review of *Psycho*—an unprecedented thing for the *New York Times*—in which he more or less retracted some of his negative statements, in view of the fact that by that time the film had become a resounding success.

Second, within a year of the appearance of *Psycho*, William Castle did a little B-picture called *Homicidal*, with a lot of on-camera gore, including the stabbing in the stomach of a repulsively fat man with blood spurting all over the screen, as well as on the wedding dress of the charming bride who stuck a butcher knife in his belly. And *Time's* comment was that this film was much better than *Psycho*.

TZ: What was your association with Hitchcock like?

Bloch: My association with Hitchcock was peripheral. To begin with, when the book was bought for film use, it was bought blind. Mr. Hitchcock's name was not used because that would have increased the asking price.

I did not meet Mr. Hitchcock until I was established out here on the Coast. My first meeting occurred, as I said, at the initial screening of *Psycho*, to which he kindly invited me. After that I did, oh, a dozen or so teleplays for the Hitchcock television show, both the half-hour and one-hour formats.

At one time Hitchcock was kind enough to offer me a contract to work on an idea for a film. I went into the studio and had a lovely lunch with him at his lovely bungalow. We had lovely wines and lovely conversation—which I found quite enthralling, because he was a remarkably entertaining and knowledgeable man. All the while the lovely tape recorder was grinding away underneath our table.

In the course of conversation I suddenly realized something that sent me scampering back to the telephone, after it was all over, to speak to my agent. I said, "Look, this is a wonderful and a flattering thing, and I would like very much to work with Hitch and come up with a story. But I just looked over the contract again, and it corresponds to the conversations we've had. The terms of the contract are such that I am obliged to work with Mr. Hitchcock until we come up with a notion for a film that is 'mutually acceptable,' whereupon I will then write the script."

I said to my agent, "This can go on for six months. I could have lovely lunches with Hitch two or three times a week. I'm sure it would be most enjoyable and most fascinating, and I'd dearly love to do it, but I just can't afford it. I've got to earn a living, and since I wouldn't receive a penny until we came up with a complete story line that would be mutually acceptable, please tell him I'm sorry, but I just have to bow out."

And so I did. That was as close as I ever came to working with Alfred Hitchcock personally, and while I regret it to this day, it just wasn't the sort of thing I could afford to do.

TZ: Now you are involved in writing another novel, aren't you?

Bloch: It's completed. The title is *Psycho II*.

TZ: What's it about?

Bloch: To put it briefly, Norman Bates is loose again—today! Which, by the way, makes the book science-fictional (although I'm sure no one will recognize the fact), in the sense that it takes place in a parallel universe in

which there was no book or motion picture called *Psycho*. This is Norman Bates's world as presented in the novel, brought up to date and invested with the reality of today.

TZ: What inspired the book?

Bloch: Primarily the inspiration for *Psycho II* came from my own sense of future shock as I surveyed the increasing violence of today's world and wondered about the Rape of Things to Come. And I said to myself, What would happen if a character like Norman Bates, who seemed like such a strange and unnatural monster in his own era, were to reenter the world again today to face its present perils and its future fears?

TZ: *Psycho II* sounds like a highly commercial title. Do you also have a motion picture in mind?

Bloch: No, but my feeling is that if the book is well received, it will very probably be filmed. Of course, there's no Alfred Hitchcock around today—more's the pity!

TZ: Do you have any thoughts about who might play Norman Bates?

Bloch: No, I'm taking it one step at a time—and this is not entirely a matter of my own volition. I happen to have the kind of mind that is incapable of handling more than one idea at a time. I'm presently writing another book, and until that's completed I've put *Psycho II* on the back burner. It will probably be published next February.

TZ: Is the Norman Bates of *Psycho II* as crazy as he was in the first book?

Bloch: I can only tell you that Norman is the same sweet, lovable, unspoiled boy that he always was—but perhaps even more so! Time has not dimmed nor custom staled his infinite variety.

TZ: As with your other major characters, Norman Bates would be certifiably crazy even if he had never killed anyone. You always focus on the person; whatever violence there may be is never presented as attractive because you focus not on the deed but on the doer.

Bloch: That is correct. It also exemplifies my personal attitude toward this sort of thing. I don't want to make violence attractive, to do something in print or on film that others will want to go out and emulate.

In my own subjective opinion, the Burt Reynolds movies are far more immoral than anything I've ever written because, in effect, they preach

that it is quite a smart-ass thing to lie, steal, and walk away with a big grin on your face. To me this is not a particularly constructive attitude, even though it is certainly one that can find a great deal of favor in contemporary society.

TZ: But why do you write stories about crazy people committing acts of violence when society is full of people doing just that?

Bloch: Some forty years ago I wrote things that were repudiations of current beliefs in psychotherapy. I didn't find them valid. I began to write this kind of thing, you may recall, years before it was all that commonplace. I could see it coming ever since World War II, which was the time I began to branch out from pure fantasy into the impure realities of human behavior. I have always felt that our society is getting more and more like an insane asylum that is ruled by therapists and authority figures who don't know what they're talking about.

TZ: You don't think highly of therapists.

Bloch: No, I don't.

TZ: But you write about them frequently.

Bloch: Absolutely. And for that very reason. I don't present them in too favorable a light. I believe our veneration of the psychotherapist as an authority figure is one of the chief dangers of our culture, just as 150 years ago our similar veneration of the phrenologist was dangerous, although it didn't lead to the extremes and wasn't on such a scale as we find today. The phrenologists were not entrusted with decision-making.

I am personally and privately a great believer in individual responsibility and individual conduct as an exemplar. I do not believe that any general, widespread theory, either in abstract or in application, can solve the problems of life. I think we can only do it on a limited scale by providing a personal example, each to the other.

TZ: That's a terribly old-fashioned view.

Bloch: Yes, but remember, I come from an age where "old-fashioned" wasn't necessarily derogatory. There was such a time. Now the only way in which "old-fashioned" could be used in anything other than a pejorative sense is in a commercial. We speak of "rich, down-home, old-fashioned country

goodness"—meaning we're trying to sell something with artificial crap in it.

TZ: One thing that hasn't changed over the centuries is that people remain fascinated by crime and brutality. What's the attraction of such subjects?

Bloch: I believe that a majority of humankind is violent. I believe that we're both animal and ethereal in our natures. And it's a great struggle for most people to effect a meaningful and practical compromise between the two opposite poles.

TZ: Often the crowd itself is the villain—in *This Crowded Earth*, for example.

Bloch: That's something I very strongly and sincerely believe in. I believe no constructive human activity has ever been the work of a mob, but only of individuals or of several people working in close communal concert. To me, any large group of people is susceptible to mass hysteria and harsh and violent conduct. That is demonstrable merely by watching or reading current news, and it's true back through history to the beginning of recorded events.

TZ: In *This Crowded Earth*, which came out in 1968, you wrote a science fiction novel that discusses the problems of a world very much more crowded than our own—the result of people refusing to stop the breeding process or even slow it down. Do you really think that's what's going on?

Bloch: I did believe it and I still believe it. Last night I watched *Sixty Minutes* on television and saw the inhabitants of a certain English village where people suffer from a genetic disorder, a terrible illness that affects at least fifty percent of their children. And yet, one by one, they steadfastly went on record as not caring. They chose to disregard this factor and have children.

TZ: Would you consider your stories, then, to be cautionary tales?

Bloch: No, I am not necessarily cautioning. I am indulging in a commentary on the world as I sometimes see it. And remember, *This Crowded Earth* was written some years ago, I'd hate to tell you how greatly the population has increased since then. God help us.

TZ: It seems odd to me that you never wrote anything for *The Twilight Zone*.

Bloch: When the show was being aired, I was writing for Hitchcock and for *Thriller*. And there was a great deal of rivalry I gathered, between the camps. I was good friends with Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont, and Jerry Soli, all of whom were major contributors to *The Twilight Zone*. We socialized together frequently, but I never did anything for that program because I was too well occupied to beg n with.

TZ: The tv writing kept you busy, then?

Bloch: Yes. I found when I came out here in 1959 that, unlike many of my colleagues, I had very little difficulty in selling many of my published stories to television—and later on to the movies, for anthology films—because they already were consciously or unconsciously shaped for adaptation to a visual medium. I think I can safely say that, over the years, I have sold more stories of my own for adaptation to television and films than anyone else in the fantasy or, probably, the science fiction field, because they could easily be transformed or translated—not that they would necessarily be any better.

TZ: What was Hollywood like when you got there?

Bloch: There was still enough of the old Hollywood left to make it fascinating to somebody like me, who'd been a film fan ever since I was a small boy. Universal Studios didn't have the dreaded black tower. It had charming little bungalows scattered around the grounds, inhabited by people like Hitchcock, Cary Grant, and other luminaries. In the little garden areas between the bungalows the squirrels searched for nuts—and often found them, believe me. Other studios were similarly reminiscent of the great days. When I worked on my first film at Warner Brothers, Jack Warner's tennis courts were still in evidence. They still had the old Writers' Building. All of the studios had commissaries where you could eat at noon and gape at the other stars and starlets.

Most attractive to me was the fact that some of the old-time people I had watched up there on the screen for many years before as a young boy were still around. It was quite exciting for me to write for *Thriller* and meet Boris Karloff and become a friend of his. It was equally thrilling to write screenplays a few years later



Bloch at ease in his California home; photo on wall is of Richard Matheson. "In my own opinion, the Burt Reynolds movies are far more immoral than anything I've ever written."

for Joan Crawford Barbara Stanwyck, Robert Taylor—people like that.

One of my dreams come true was to become a friend of Buster Keaton before he died. I wrote a screenplay for Samuel Goldwyn Jr. It was titled *The Merry-Go-Round* and was based in part on Ray Bradbury's short story "The Black Ferris." I expanded and enlarged this into a feature-length film that revolved around the activities of a small boy and the old-time stage magician who befriends him. This was the role that Buster was supposed to play, and of course it gave him a wonderful opportunity to set up an entire comedy magic act.

Buster was quite intrigued by it. He went with me to Goldwyn's studio and enacted the entire role in pantomime before Sam Junior. It was a wonderful thing for us to see, and it was the first time I realized that he'd actually studied this role. But it was the only performance ever given of it, because when the screenplay was done—and I had done revisions, because Goldwyn was determined to do it—we hit upon a snag. The distributors didn't think that a film that centered about the activities of a small boy and had no love interest would be profitable to anyone but Disney. And it was never made. It's a pity, because there were some elements in it that were not so gruesome or downbeat as the ones you tend to associate me with. More along the lines of that short story "The Movie People," which I think represents me more truly than the sadistic and gory material.

TZ: Were you ever a Western fan?

Bloch: Not really, though I saw many of them at Saturday matinees. When I was growing up, I was watching silents and early talkies. Once the talkies came in, after 1929, the matinees became too noisy for a sophisticated

teenager and I didn't see Westerns anymore.

Silents are a very different medium from talkies, largely because of methods of presentation. I don't know how the situation has been for you, but out here there are still occasions when an old, silent-film house with a huge Wurlitzer organ will be taken over for a one-night stand, and one of the still-living organists of the silent days will get up there, along with a fine, clear 35-millimeter print of Harold Lloyd in *The Freshman*, and before packed audiences the film will unwind the way it did in 1925. And by God, it'll get exactly the reaction it got then. As a matter of fact, the result of the particular instance I'm describing was that the University of Southern California held a Harold Lloyd retrospective which attracted the same large audiences for nineteen showings. And these kids, who didn't even know the man's name, laughed in all the right places, at all the right things, and brought the house down.

I have seen many other silent pictures—the good ones—in the proper circumstances and gotten the same reactions. The bad films were bad then, and if you go back and read the reviews, you'll find that they were identified at the time as being bad. Seeing them from scratched prints with no photographic quality, in some little screening room with no musical accompaniment, or in a campus setting where everybody is trying to make Brownie points by raucous remarks, is not seeing the silent films the way they should be presented.

TZ: Especially if there's no music.

Bloch: Yes, and it has to be the right music. Whenever I see some of the television presentations, I fume with indignation. There was no ricky-ticky Mickey Mouse music playing in the

background on the piano. Almost all of the films I saw were done with full organ accompaniment, if not full orchestral accompaniment; there was a score, and it was properly played. There was nothing at all mawkish or maudlin or whimsy-poo amusing about that accompaniment.

TZ: One of the great silent classics was the 1921 German film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. You wrote a remake of that—as a talkie—in 1962, and I understand you weren't pleased with the result.

Bloch: Not at all. My plan was to present a film that was an homage to the original *Caligari*. I was told that was the intention of the original director, and to present my story completely in realistic terms so the viewers believe the heroine of the film (Glynis Johns) has been captured in a strange-old-house setting, by a madman.

Not until the final five minutes of the film would they realize that she herself was a patient in the sanatorium, that the madman was the head of the establishment, and that her erstwhile lover was, in actuality, her son.

Somewhere during the course of the script the director also became the producer. By the time the script was finished he had determined he would also become the writer. The first thing I knew about it was that there was another script, with totally different dialogue that gave away by its floridness and flamboyance the so-called secret of the film—right up front, so there was no longer suspense, no longer any doubt in the mind of anyone, just what this was. It was a shame and a scam.

When this occurred, I was all for taking my name off it—particularly when I discovered this gentleman was fighting for screen credit. But I was advised by someone in the business not to do so, because it would set a dangerous precedent.

Well, this was one of the unfortunate things that has occurred along with the many good things. Over the course of a long career, one can only expect to have a few of these incidents. Fortunately, the pleasant things have outweighed the rest. I've been very lucky, and I'm very grateful. As long as I can keep on writing, I'm as happy as a baby with a firecracker up its nose. **17**



the Jaunt

by
stephen king

IT WAS A JOURNEY ONLY SLEEPERS SURVIVED.

This is the last call for Jaunt-701," the pleasant female voice echoed through New York's Port Authority Terminal, which had not changed much in the last three hundred years or so—it was still grungy and a little frightening. The automated female voice was perhaps the most pleasant thing about it. "This is Jaunt Service to Whitehead City, Mars," the voice continued. "All ticketed passengers should now be in the upstairs sleep lounge. Make sure your validation papers are in order. Thank you."

The upstairs Jaunt terminal was not grungy. It was wall-to-wall carpeted in oyster gray. The walls were an eggshell white and hung with pleasant non-representational prints. A steady, soothing progression of colors met and swirled on the ceiling in an endless kaleidoscope. There were one hundred couches in the large room, neatly spaced in rows of ten. Five Jaunt attendants circulated, speaking in low, cheery voices and offering glasses of milk. At one side of the room was the entranceway, flanked by armed guards and another Jaunt attendant who was checking the validation papers of a latecomer, a harried-looking businessman with the New York *World-Times* folded under one arm. Directly opposite, the floor dropped away in a trough about five feet wide and perhaps ten feet long; it passed through a doorless opening and looked a bit like a child's slide.

The Oates family lay side by side on four Jaunt couches near the far end of the room. Mark Oates and his wife Marilys flanked the two children.

"Daddy, will you tell me about the Jaunt now?" Ricky asked. "You promised."

"Yeah, Dad, you promised," Patricia added, and giggled shrilly for no good reason—except nervousness. Mark thought.

A businessman with a build like a bull glanced over at them and then went back to the folder of papers he was examining as he lay on his back, his spit-shined shoes neatly together. From everywhere



© 1987 by Stephen King. Illustration by Jose Reyes.

came the low murmur of conversation and the rustle of passengers settling down on the Jaunt couches.

Mark glanced over at Marilys Oates and winked. She winked back, but she also looked white and nervous. *Why not?* Mark thought. First Jaunt for all three of them. He and Marilys had discussed the advantages and drawbacks of moving the whole family for the last six months—since he'd gotten notification from Texaco that he was being transferred to Whitehead City. Finally they had decided that all of them would go for the two years Mark would be stationed on Mars. He wondered now, looking at Marilys's pale face, if she was regretting the decision.

He glanced at this watch and saw it was still almost half an hour to Jaunt-time. That was enough time to tell the story . . . and he supposed it would take the kids' minds off their nervousness. Who knew, maybe it would even cool Marilys out a little.

"All right," he said. Ricky and Pat were watching him seriously, his son twelve, his daughter nine. He told himself again that Ricky would be deep in the swamp of puberty and his daughter would likely be developing breasts by the time they got back to Earth, and again found it difficult to believe. The kids would be going to the tiny Whitehead Combined School with the other hundred or so engineering and oil-company brats that were there; his son might well be going on a geology field trip to Phobos not so many months distant. It was difficult to believe . . . but true.

Who knows? he thought wryly. *Maybe it'll do something about my jumps, too.*

"So far as we know," he began, "the Jaunt was invented about three hundred and twenty years ago, around the year 1987, by a fellow named Victor Carew. He did it as part of a private research project that was funded by some government money . . . and eventually the government pretty much took it over, of course. The reason we don't know the exact date is because Carew was something of an eccentric—"

"You mean he was crazy, Dad?" Ricky asked.

"Eccentric means a little bit crazy, dear," Marilys said, and smiled across the children at Mark. She looked a little less nervous now, he thought.

"Oh."

"Anyway, he'd been experimenting with the process for quite some time before he informed the government of what he had," Mark went on, "and he only told them because he was running out of money and they weren't going to refund him."

"Your money cheerfully refunded," Pat said, and giggled shrilly again.

"That's right, honey," Mark said, and ruffled her hair gently. At the far end of the room he saw a door slide noiselessly open and two more attendants came out, dressed in the bright red jumpers of the

Jaunt Service, pushing a rolling table. On it was a stainless steel nozzle attached to a rubber hose; beneath the table's skirts, tastefully hidden, Mark knew there were two bottles of gas; in the net bag hooked to the side were one hundred disposable masks. Mark went on talking, not wanting his people to see the representatives of Lethe until they had to; and, given enough time to tell the whole story, they would welcome the gas-passers with open arms.

Considering the alternative.

"Of course, you know that the Jaunt is teleportation, no more or less," he said. "Sometimes in college chemistry and physics they call it the Carew Process, but it's really teleportation, and it was Carew himself—if you can believe the stories—who named it 'the Jaunt.' He was a science fiction reader, and there's a story by a man named Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination* it's called, and this fellow Bester made up the word 'jaunte' for teleportation in it. Except in his book, you could Jaunt just by thinking about it, and we can't really do that."

The attendants were fixing a mask to the steel nozzle and handing it to an elderly woman at the far end of the room. She took it, inhaled once, and fell quiet and limp on her couch. Her skirt had pulled up a little, revealing one slack thigh road-mapped with varicose veins. One of the attendants considerably readjusted it for her while the other pulled off the used mask and affixed a fresh one. It was a process that made Mark think of the plastic glasses in motel rooms. He wished to God that Patty would cool out a little bit; he had seen children who had to be held down, and sometimes they screamed as the rubber mask came down and covered their faces. It was not an abnormal reaction in a child, he supposed, but it was nasty to watch and he didn't want to see it happen to Patty. About Rick he felt more confident.

"I guess you could say the Jaunt came along at the last possible moment," he resumed. He spoke toward Ricky, but reached across and took his daughter's hand. Her fingers closed over his with an immediate panicky tightness. Her palm was cool and sweating lightly. "The world was running out of oil, and most of what was left belonged to the middle-eastern desert peoples, who were committed to using it as a political weapon of blackmail. They had formed an oil cartel they called OPEC—"

"What's a cartel, Daddy?" Pat asked.

"Well, a monopoly," Mark said.

"Like a club, honey," Marilys said. "And you could only be in that club if you had lots of oil."

"Oh," Patty said.

"I don't have time to sketch the whole mess in for you," Mark said. "You'll study some of it in school, but it *was* a mess—let's let it go at that. If you owned a car, you could only drive it two days a week, and gasoline cost fifteen Old Dollars a gallon—"

**he had seen children
who had to be held down,
and sometimes they
screamed as the rubber
mask came down and
covered their faces.**

"Gosh," Ricky said, "it only costs four cents a gallon now, doesn't it, Dad?"

Mark smiled. "That's why we're going where we're going, Rick. There's enough oil on Mars to last almost eight thousand years, and enough on Venus to last another twenty thousand ... but working on Venus is a hairier proposition, of course."

Ricky nodded.

"The point is, it was always there, but we were only able to get it because of the Jaunt. When Carew invented his process, the world was slipping into a new dark age. The winter before, over ten thousand people had frozen to death in the United States alone because there wasn't enough energy to heat them."

"Oh, yuck," Patty said matter-of-factly.

Mark glanced to his right and saw the attendants talking to a timid-looking man, persuading him. At last he took the mask and seemed to fall dead on his couch seconds later. *First-timer*, Mark thought. *You can always tell.*

"For Carew," he said, "it started with a pencil ... and some keys ... a wristwatch ... and then some mice. It was the mice that showed him there was a problem ..."

Victor Carew came back to his laboratory in a stumbling fever of excitement. He thought he knew now how Morse had felt, and Alexander Graham Bell, and Edison ... but this was bigger than all of them, and twice he had almost wrecked the truck on the way back from the pet shop in New Paltz, where he had spent his last twenty dollars on nine white mice. What he had left in the world was ninety-three cents in change and eighteen dollars in his savings account ... but this did not occur to him.

The lab was in a renovated barn at the end of a mile-long dirt road off Route 26. It was making the turn onto this road where he had just missed cracking up his Brat pickup truck for the second time. The gas tank was almost empty and there would be no more for ten days to two weeks, but this did not concern him, either. His mind was in a delirious whirl.

What had happened was not totally unexpected, no. One of the reasons the government had funded him even to the paltry tune of twenty-thousand a year was because the unrealized possibility

was always there in the field of particle transmission and what was (or what appeared to be) particulate transfer through what might (or might not) be the fourth dimension.

But to have it happen like this ... suddenly ... with no warning ... and powered by less electricity than was needed to run a color TV ... God! Christ!

He brought the Brat to a screech-halt in the dirt of the dooryard, grabbed the box on the dirty seat beside him by its grab-handles (on the box were dogs and cats and hamsters and goldfish and the legend I CAME FROM STACKPOLE'S HOUSE OF PETS) and ran for the big double barn doors. From inside the box came the scurry and whisk of his test subjects.

He tried to push one of the big doors open along its track, and when it wouldn't budge, he remembered that he had locked it. Carew uttered a loud "Shit!" and fumbled for his keys. The government commanded that the lab be locked at all times—it was one of the strings they put on their money—but Carew kept forgetting.

He brought his keys out and for a moment simply stared at them, mesmerized, running the ball of his thumb over the notches in the Brat's ignition key. He thought again: *God! Christ!* Then he scrambled between the keys on the ring for the Yale key that unlocked the barn door.

As the first telephone had been used inadvertently—Bell crying into it, "Watson, come here!" when he saw the trash fire break out—so the first act of teleportation had occurred by accident. Victor Carew had teleported the first two fingers of his left hand across the fifty-yard width of the barn.

Technically, the experiments he was conducting were in the field of particle transmission, and Carew had set up two portals at opposite sides of the barn. On his end was a simple ion gun, available through any electronics supply warehouse for under five hundred dollars. On the other end, standing just beyond the far portal—both of them rectangular and the size of a paperback book—was a cloud chamber. Between them was what appeared to be an opaque shower curtain, except that shower curtains are not made of lead. The idea was to shoot the ions through Portal One and then walk around and watch them streaming across the cloud chamber standing just beyond Portal Two, with the lead shield between to prove they really were being transmitted. Except that, for the past two years, the process had only worked twice, and Carew didn't have the slightest idea why.

As he was setting the ion gun in place, his fingers had slipped through the portal—ordinarily no problem, but this morning his hip had also brushed the toggle switch on the control panel at the left of the portal. He was not aware of what had hap-

pened—the machinery gave off only the lowest audible hum—until he felt a tingling, burning sensation in his fingers.

"It was not like an electric shock," Carew wrote in his one and only article on the subject before the government shut him up. The article was published, of all places, in *Popular Mechanics*. He had sold it to them for seven hundred and fifty dollars in a last-ditch effort to keep the Jaunt a matter of private enterprise. "There was none of that unpleasant tingle that one gets if one grasps a frayed lamp cord, for instance. It was more like the sensation one gets if one puts one's hand on the casing of some small machine that is working very hard. The vibration is so fast and light that it is, literally, a tingling sensation.

"Then I looked down at the portal and saw that my index finger was gone on a diagonal slant through the middle knuckle, and my second finger was gone slightly above that. In addition, the nail portion of my third finger had disappeared."

Carew had jerked his hand back instinctively, crying out. He so much expected to see blood, he wrote later, that he actually hallucinated blood for a moment or two. His elbow struck the ion gun and knocked it off the table, smashing it.

He stood there with his fingers in his mouth, verifying that they were still there, and whole. The thought that he had been working too hard crossed his mind. And then the other thought crossed his mind: the thought that the last set of modifications might have . . . might have done something.

He did not push his fingers back in; in fact, Carew only Jaunted once more in his entire life.

At first, he did nothing. He took a long, aimless walk around the barn, running his hands through his hair, wondering if he should call Carson in New Jersey or perhaps Buffington in Charlotte. Carson wouldn't accept a collect phone call, the cheap ass-kissing bastard, but Buffington probably would. Then an idea struck and he ran across to Portal Two, thinking that if his fingers had actually crossed the barn, there might be some sign of it.

There was not, of course. Portal Two stood atop three stacked Pomona orange crates, looking like nothing so much as one of those toy guillotines missing the blade. On one side of its stainless steel frame was a plug-in jack, from which a cord ran back to the transmission terminal, which was little more than a particle transformer hooked into a computer feed-line.

Which reminded him—

Carew glanced at his watch and saw it was quarter past eleven. His deal with the government consisted of short money plus computer time, which was infinitely valuable. His computer tie-in lasted until 3 P.M. this afternoon, and then it was good-



bye until Monday. He had to get moving, had to do something—

"I glanced at the pile of crates again," Carew writes in his *Popular Mechanics* article, "and then I looked at the pads of my fingers. And sure enough, the proof was there. It would not, I thought then, convince anyone but myself; but in the beginning, of course, it is only one's self that one has to convince. isn't that so?"

"What was it, Dad?" Rick, asked.

"Yeah!" Patricia added. "What?"

Mark grinned a little. They were all hooked now, even Marilys. They had nearly forgotten where they were. From the corner of his eye he could see the Jaunt attendants whisper-wheeling their cart slowly among the Jaunters, putting them to sleep. It was never as rapid a process in the civilian sector as it was in the military, he had discovered; civilians got nervous and wanted to talk it over. The nozzle and the rubber mask were too reminiscent of hospital operating rooms, where the surgeon with his knives lurked somewhere behind the anesthetist with her selection of dark gasses in stainless steel canisters. Sometimes there was panic, hysteria; and always there were a few who simply lost their nerve. Mark had observed two of these as he spoke to the children: two men who had simply arisen from their couches, walked across to the entryway with no fanfare at all, unpinned the validation papers that had been affixed to their lapels, turned them in, and exited without looking back. Jaunt attendants were

under strict instructions not to argue with those who left; there were always standbys, sometimes as many as forty or fifty of them, hoping against hope. As those who simply couldn't take it left, standbys were let in with their own validations pinned to their shirts.

"Carew found two splinters in his index finger," he told the children. "He took them out and put them aside. One was lost, but you can see the other one in the Smithsonian Annex in Washington. It's in a hermetically sealed glass case near the moon rocks the first space travelers brought back from the moon—"

"Our moon, Dad, or Mars's?" Ricky asked.

"Ours," Mark said, smiling a little. "Only one manned rocket flight has ever landed on Mars, Ricky, and that was a French expedition somewhere around 2630. Anyway, that's why there happens to be a plain old splinter from an orange crate in the Smithsonian Institution. Because it's the first object we have that was actually teleported—Jaunted—across space."

"What happened then?" Patty asked.

"Well, according to the story, Carew ran back to..."

Carew ran back to Portal One and stood there for a moment, heart thudding, out of breath. *Got to calm down*, he told himself. *Got to think about this. You can't maximize your time if you go off half-cocked.*

Deliberately disregarding the forefront of his mind, which was screaming at him to hurry up and do something, he dug his nail-clippers out of his pocket and used the point of the file to dig the splinters out of his index finger. He dropped them onto the white inner sleeve of a Hershey Bar he had eaten while tinkering with the transformer and trying to widen its afferent capability (he had apparently succeeded in that beyond his wildest dreams). One rolled off the wrapper and was lost; the other ended up in the Smithsonian Institute, locked in a glass case that was cordoned off with thick velvet ropes and watched vigilantly and eternally by a computer-monitored closed-circuit tv camera.

The splinter extraction finished, Carew felt a little calmer. A pencil. That was as good as anything. He took one from beside the clipboard on the shelf above him and ran it gently into Portal One. It disappeared smoothly, inch by inch, like something in an optical illusion or in a very good magician's trick. The pencil had said EBERHARD FABER NO. 2 on one of its sides, black letters stamped on yellow-painted wood. When he had pushed the pencil in until all but EBERH had disappeared, Carew walked around to the other side of Portal One. He looked in.

He saw the pencil in cut-off view, as if a knife had chopped smoothly through it. Carew felt with his

fingers where the rest of the pencil should have been, and of course there was nothing. He ran across the barn to Portal Two, and there was the missing part of the pencil, lying on the top crate. Heart thumping so hard that it seemed to shake his entire chest, Carew grasped the sharpened point of his pencil and pulled it the rest of the way through.

He held it up; he looked at it. Suddenly he took it and wrote IT WORKS! on a piece of barn-board; he wrote it so hard that the lead snapped on the last letter. And Carew began to laugh shrilly in the empty barn; to laugh so hard that he startled the sleeping swallows into flight among the high rafters.

"Works!" he shouted, and ran back to Portal One. He was waving his arms, the broken pencil knotted up in one fist. "Works! Works! *Do you hear me, Carson, you cheap prick? It works AND I DID IT!*"

"Mark, watch what you say to the children," Marilys reproached him.

Mark shrugged. "It's what he's supposed to have said."

"Well, can't you do a little selective editing?"

"Daddy," Pat asked, "is that pencil in the museum, too?"

"Does a bear shit in the woods?" Mark said, and then clapped one hand over his mouth. Both children giggled wildly—but that shrill note was gone from Patty's voice, Mark was glad to hear—and after a moment of trying to look serious, Marilys began to giggle too.

The keys went through next; Carew simply tossed them through the portal. He was beginning to think on track again now, and it seemed to him that the first thing that needed finding out was if the process produced things on the other end exactly as they had been, or if they were in any way changed by the trip.

He saw the keys go through and disappear; at exactly the same moment he heard them jingle on the crate across the barn. He ran across—really only trotting now—and on the way he paused to shove the lead shower curtain back on its track. He didn't need it now.

He grabbed the keys, went to the lock the government had forced him to put on the door, and tried the Yale key. It worked perfectly. He tried the house key. It also worked. So did the keys which opened his file cabinets and the one which started the Brat pickup.

Carew pocketed the keys and took off his watch. It was a Seiko quartz LC with a built-in calculator below the digital face—twenty-four tiny buttons that would allow him to do everything from addition to subtraction to square roots. A delicate piece of machinery—and just as important, a chro-

nometer. Carew put it down in front of Portal One and pushed it through with a pencil.

He ran across and grabbed it up. When he put it through, the watch had said 11:31:07. It now said 11:31:49. Very good. Right on the money, only he should have had an assistant over there to peg the fact that there had been no time gain once and forever. Well, no matter. Soon enough the government would have him wading hip-deep in assistants.

He tried the calculator. Two and two still made four; eight divided by four was still two; the square root of eleven was still 3.3166247... and so on.

That was when he decided it was mouse-time.

"What happened with the mice, Dad?" Ricky asked.

Mark hesitated briefly. There would have to be some caution here; that is, if he didn't want to scare his children (not to mention his wife) into hysteria minutes away from their first Jaunt. The major thing was to leave them with the knowledge that everything was all right now, that the problem had been licked.

"As I said, there was a slight problem..."

Horror, lunacy, and death. How's that for a slight problem, kids?

Carew set the box which read I CAME FROM STACKPOLE'S HOUSE OF PETS down on the shelf and glanced at his watch. Damned if he hadn't put the thing on upside down. He turned it around and saw that it was quarter of two. He had only an hour and a quarter of computer time left. *How the time flies when you're having fun*, he thought, and giggled wildly.

He opened the box, reached in, and pulled out a squeaking white mouse by the tail. He put it down in front of Portal One and said, "Go on, mouse." The mouse promptly ran down the side of the box and scuttered across the floor.

Cursing, Carew chased it, and managed to actually get one hand on it before it squirmed through a crack between two boards and was gone.

"SHIT!" Carew screamed, and ran back to the box of mice. He was just in time to knock two potential escapees back into the box. He got a second mouse, holding this one around the body (he was by trade a physicist, and the ways of white mice were foreign to him), and slammed the lid of the box back down.

This time he gave the old heave-ho. It clutched at Carew's palm, but to no avail; it went head-over-ratty-little-paws through Portal One, and Carew heard it immediately land on the crates across the barn.

This time he sprinted, remembering how easily the first mouse had eluded him. He need not have worried. The white mouse merely crouched on the

crate, its eyes dull, its sides aspirating weakly. Carew slowed down and approached it carefully; he was not a man used to fooling with rats, but you didn't have to be a forty-year veteran to see something was terribly, terribly wrong here.

("The mouse didn't feel so good after it went through," Mark Oates told his children with a wide smile that was only noticeably false to this wife.)

He touched the mouse. It was like touching something inert—packed straw or sawdust, perhaps—except for the aspirating sides. The mouse did not look around at Carew; it sared straight ahead. He had thrown in a squirming, very frisky and alive little animal; here was something that seemed to be a living waxwork likeness of a mouse.

Then Carew snapped his fingers in front of the mouse's small pink eyes. It blinked... and fell dead on its side.

("So Carew decided to try another mouse," Mark said.)

"What happened to the first mouse?" Ricky asked.

Mark produced that wide smile again. "It was retired with full honors," he said.)

Carew found a paper bag and put the mouse into it. He would take it to Mosconi, the vet, that evening. Mosconi could dissect it and tell him if its inner works had been rearranged. The government would disapprove his bringing a private citizen into a project which would already be classified triple top secret by the government—if they knew about it. Carew was determined that they would know about it as late in the game as possible. For all the scant help they had given him, they could wait as long as possible.

Then he remembered that Mosconi lived way the hell and gone on the other side of New Paltz, and that there wasn't enough gas in the Bat to get even halfway across town... let alone back.

But it was 2:03—he had less than an hour of computer time left. He would worry about the god-dam dissection later.

Carew constructed a makeshift chute leading to the entrance of Portal One (really the first ancestor of the modern Jaunt-Slide, Mark told the children, and Patty found the idea of a Jaunt-Slide for white mice deliciously funny) and dropped a fresh white mouse into it. He blocked the end with a large book, and after a few moments of aimless pattering and sniffing, the mouse went through the portal and disappeared.

Carew ran back across the barn.

The mouse was DOA.

There was no blood, no bodily swellings to indicate that a radical change in pressure had ruptured something inside. Carew supposed that oxygen starvation might—

**what the hell is in there?
when they go through,
they see something —
hear something —
touch something — that
literally kills them.
what?**

He shook his head impatiently. It took the white mouse only part of a second to go through; his own watch had confirmed that time remained a constant in the process, to within a few seconds or so.

The second white mouse had joined the first in the paper sack. Carew got a third out (a fourth, if you counted the fortunate mouse that had escaped through the crack between the boards), wondering for the first time which would end first—his computer time for the day or his supply of white mice.

He held this mouse firmly around the body and forced its haunches through the portal. Across the room he saw the haunches reappear ... just the haunches; the disembodied little feet were digging frantically at the rough wood of the crate.

Carew pulled the mouse back. No catatonia here; it bit the wobbling between his thumb and forefinger hard enough to bring blood. Carew dropped the mouse hurriedly back into the I CAME FROM STACKPOLE'S HOUSE OF PETS box and used the small bottle of hydrogen peroxide in his lab first-aid kit to disinfect the bite.

He put a Band-Aid over it, then rummaged around until he found a pair of heavy work-gloves. He could feel the time running out, running out, running out. It was 2:11 now.

He got another rat out and pushed it through backwards—all the way. He hurried across to Portal Two. This mouse lived for almost two minutes; it even walked a little, after a fashion. It staggered across the Pomona orange crate, fell on its side, struggled weakly to its feet, and then only squatted there. Carew snapped his fingers near its head and it lurched perhaps four steps further before falling on its side again. The aspiration of its sides slowed ... slowed ... stopped. It was dead.

Carew felt a chill.

He went back, got another mouse, and pushed it halfway through head first. He saw it reappear at the other end, just the head ... then the neck and chest. Cautiously, Carew relaxed his grip on the mouse's body, ready to grab it if it got frisky. It didn't. The mouse only stood there, half of it on one side of the barn, half on the other.

Carew jogged back to Portal Two.

The mouse was alive, but its pink eyes were glazed and dull. Its whiskers didn't move. Going around to the back of the Portal, Carew saw an amazing sight; as he had seen the pencil in cut-away, so now he saw the mouse. He saw the vertebrae of its tiny spine ending abruptly in round white circles; he saw its blood moving through the vessels; he saw the tissue moving gently with the tide of life around its minuscule gullet. If nothing else, he thought (and wrote later in his *Popular Mechanics* article), it would make a wonderful diagnostic tool.

Then he noticed that the tidal movement of the tissues had ceased. The patient had died.

Carew pulled the mouse out by the snout, not liking the feel of it, and dropped it into the paper sack with its companions. *Enough with the white mice, he decided. The mice die. They die if you put them through all the way, and they die if you put them through halfway head-first. Put them through halfway butt-first, they stay frisky.*

What the hell is in there?

Sensory input, he thought almost randomly. When they go through they see something—hear something—touch something—that literally kills them. What?

He had no idea—but he was going to find out. Eventually.

Carew still had almost forty minutes before the computer cut him out. He unscrewed the thermometer from the wall beside his kitchen door, trotted back to the barn with it, and put it through the portals. The thermometer went in at 83° F; it came out at 83° F. He rummaged through the spare room where he kept a few toys to amuse his two grandchildren with; among them he found a packet of balloons. He blew one of them up, tied it off, and batted it through the portal like a green volleyball. It came out the other end intact and unharmed—a start down the road toward answering his questions about a sudden change in pressure somehow caused by what he was already thinking of as the Jaunting process.

With five minutes to go before the witching hour of three o'clock, he ran into his house, snatched up his goldfish bowl (inside, Percy and Patrick swished their tails and darted about in agitation) and ran back with them. He shoved the goldfish bowl through Portal One.

He hurried across to Portal Two, where his goldfish bowl sat on the crate. Patrick was floating belly-up; Percy swam slowly around near the bottom of the bowl, as if dazed. A moment later he also floated belly-up. Carew was reaching for the goldfish bowl when Percy gave a weak flick of his tail and resumed his lachadaisical swimming. Slowly, he seemed to throw off whatever the effect had been, and by the time Carew got back from Mosconi's Vet-

erinary Clinic that night at nine o'clock, Percy seemed as perky as ever.

Encouraged, Carew fed him a double ration of fish food.

After the computer had cut him out for the day, Carew decided to hitch a ride over to Mosconi's. Accordingly, he was standing on the shoulder of Route 26 at quarter of four that afternoon, dressed in jeans and a loud plain sportcoat, his thumb out, a paper bag in his other hand.

Finally, a kid driving a Chevette not much bigger than a sardine can pulled over, and Carew got in. "What you got in the bag, man?" The kid asked him.

"My lunch," Carew said.

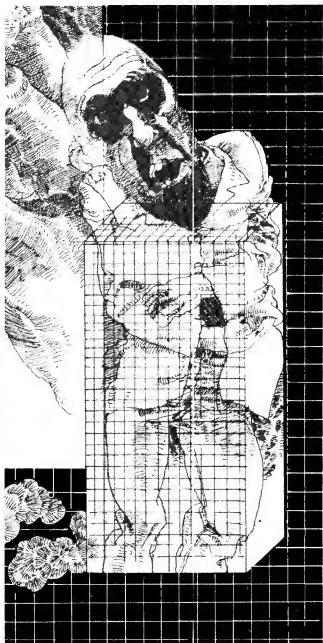
Mosconi, the vet, dissected one of the mice on the spot, and agreed to dissect the others later and call Carew on the telephone with the results. The initial result was not very encouraging; so far as Mosconi could tell, the mouse he had opened up was perfectly healthy except for the fact that it was dead.

Depressing.

Victor Carew was eccentric, but he was no fool," Mark said. The Jaunt attendants were getting close now, and he supposed he would have to hurry up ... or he would be finishing this in the Wake-Up Room in Whitehead City. "Hitching a ride back home that night—and he had to walk most of the way, so the story goes—he realized that he had maybe solved a third of the energy crisis at one single stroke. All the goods that had to go by train and truck and boat and plane before that day could be Jaunted. You could write a letter to your friend in London or Rome or Senegal, and he could have it the very next day—without an ounce of oil needing to be burned. We take it for granted, but it was a big thing to Carew, believe me. And to everyone else, as well."

"But what happened to the mice, Daddy?" Ricky asked.

"That's what Carew kept asking himself," Mark said, "because he also realized that if *people* could use the Jaunt, that would solve almost *all* of the energy crisis. And that we might be able to conquer space. In his *Popular Mechanics* article he said that even the stars could finally be ours. And the metaphor he used was crossing a shallow stream without getting your shoes wet. You'd just get a big rock, and throw it in the stream, then get another rock, stand on the first rock, and throw *that* into the stream, go back and get a third rock, go from the first rock to the second rock, throw the third rock into the stream, and keep up like that until you'd made a path of stepping-stones all the way across the stream ... or in this case, the solar system, or maybe even the galaxy."



"I don't get that at *all*," Patty said.

"That's because you're a nurd," Ricky said smugly.

"I am *not*! Daddy, Ricky called me a nurd!"

"Children, don't," Marilyn said gently.

"Carew pretty much foresaw what has happened," Mark said. "Drone rocket ships programmed to land, first on the moon, then on Mars, then on Venus and the outer moons of Jupiter ... drones really only programmed to do one thing after they landed—"

"Set up a Jaunt station for astronauts," Ricky said smugly.

Mark nodded. "And now there are scientific outposts all over the solar system, and maybe someday, long after we're gone, there will even be another planet for us. There are Jaunt-ships on their way to four different star systems with solar systems of their own ... but it'll be a long, long time before they get there."

"I want to know what happened to the *mice*," Patty said impatiently.

"Well, eventually the government got into it," Mark said. "Carew kept them out of it for as long as he could, but finally they got wind of it and landed on him with both feet. Carew was nominal head of the Jaunt project until he died ten years later, but he was never really in charge of it again."

"Jeez, the poor guy!" Rick said.

"But he got to be a hero," Patricia said. "He's in all the history books, just like President Lincoln and President Bush."

I'm sure that's a great comfort to him ... wherever he is, Mark thought, and then went on, carefully glossing over the rough parts.

The government, which had been pushed to the wall by the escalating energy crisis, did indeed come in with both feet. They wanted the Jaunt on a paying basis as soon as possible—like yesterday. Faced with economic chaos and the increasingly probable picture of anarchy and mass starvation in the 1990s, only last-ditch pleading made them put off announcement of the Jaunt before an exhaustive spectrographic analysis of Jaunted articles could be completed. When the analyses were complete—and showed no changes in the makeup of Jaunted artifacts—the existence of the Jaunt was announced with international hoopla. Showing intelligence for once (necessity is, after all, the mother of invention), the U.S. government put Young and Rubicam in charge of the pr.

That was where the myth-making around Victor Carew, an elderly, rather peculiar man who showered perhaps twice a week and changed his clothes only when he thought of it, began. Young and Rubicam and the agencies which followed them turned Carew into a combination of Thomas Edison, Eli Whitney, Pecos Bill, and Flash Gordon. The blackly funny part of all this (and Mark Oates did not pass this on to his family) was that Victor Carew might even then have been dead or insane; art imitates life, they say, and Carew would have been familiar with the Robert Heinlein novel about the doubles who stand in for figures in the public eye.

Victor Carew was a problem; a nagging problem that wouldn't go away. He was a loudmouthed foot-dragger, a holdover from the Ecological Sixties—a time when there was still enough energy floating around to allow foot-dragging as a luxury. These, on the other hand, were the Nasty Eighties, with coal clouds befouling the sky and a long section of the California coastline expected to be uninhabitable for perhaps sixty years due to a nuclear "excursion."

Victor Carew remained a problem until about 1991—and then he became a rubber stamp, smiling,

quiet, grandfatherly; a figure seen waving from podiums in newsfilms. In 1993, three years before he officially died, he rode in the pace-car at the Tournament of Roses Parade.

Puzzling. And a little ominous.

The results of the announcement of the Jaunt—of working teleportation—on October 19th, 1988, was a hammerstroke of worldwide excitement and economic upheaval. On the world money markets, the battered old American dollar suddenly skyrocketed through the roof. People who had bought gold at eight hundred and six dollars an ounce suddenly found that a pound of gold would bring something less than twelve hundred dollars. In the year between the announcement of the Jaunt and the first working Jaunt-Stations in New York and L.A., the stock market climbed a little over two hundred points. The price of oil dropped only seventy cents a barrel, but by 1994, with Jaunt-Stations crisscrossing the U.S. at the pressure-points of seventy major cities, OPEC solidarity had been cracked, and the price of oil began to tumble. By 1998, with Stations in most free world cities and goods routinely Jaunted between Tokyo and Paris, Paris and London, London and New York, New York and Berlin, oil had dropped to fourteen dollars a barrel. By 2006, when people at last began to use the Jaunt on a regular basis, the stock market had leveled off seven hundred points above its 1987 levels and oil was selling for six dollars a barrel.

By 2006, oil had become what it had been in 1906: a toy.

"What about the *mice*, Daddy?" Patty asked impatiently. "What happened to the *mice*?"

Mark decided it might be okay now, and he drew the attention of his children to the Jaunt attendants, who were now passing gas only three aisles from them. Rick only nodded, but Patty looked troubled as a lady with a fashionably shaved-and-painted head took a whiff from the rubber mask and fell unconscious.

"Can't Jaunt when you're awake, can you, Dad?" Ricky said.

Mark nodded and smiled reassuringly at Patricia. "Carew understood even before the government got into it," he said.

"How *did* the government get into it, Mark?" Marilyns asked.

Mark smiled. "Over computer time, of course," he said. "That was the only thing that Carew couldn't beg, borrow, or steal. The computer handled the actual particulate transmission—billions of pieces of information. It's still the computer, you know, that makes sure you don't come through with your head somewhere in the middle of your stomach."

Marilyns shuddered.

"Don't be frightened," he said. "There's never been a screw-up like that, Mare. *Never.*"

"There's always a first time," she muttered.

Mark looked at Ricky. "How did he know?" he asked his son. "How did Carew know you had to be asleep, Rick?"

"When he put the mice in backwards," Rick said slowly, "they were all right. At least as long as he didn't put them *all* in. They were only—well, messed up—when he put them in head-first. Or all the way through. Right?"

"Right," Mark said. The Jaunt attendants were moving in now, wheeling their silent cart of oblivion. He wasn't going to have time to finish after all; perhaps it was just as well. "It didn't take many experiments to clarify what was happening, although they tested for a long time, of course. The Jaunt killed the entire trucking business, kids, but at least it took the pressure off the experimenters—"

Yes. Foot-dragging had become a luxury again, and the tests had gone on for better than twenty years, although Carew's first tests with drugged mice had convinced him that unconscious animals were not subject to what was known forever after as the Organic Effect or, more simply, the Jaunt Effect.

He and Mosconi had drugged several mice, put them through Portal One, retrieved them at the other side, and had waited anxiously for their test subjects to reawaken ... or to die. They had reawakened, and after a brief recovery period they had taken up their mouse-lives—eating, fucking, playing, and shitting—with no ill effects whatsoever. Those mice became the first of several generations which were studied with great interest. They showed no long-term ill effects; they did not die sooner, their pups were not born with two heads or green fur, and neither did these pups show any other long-term effects.

"When did they start with people, Dad?" Rick asked, although he had certainly read this part in school. "Tell that part!"

"I wanna know what happened to the *mice*!" Patty said again.

Although the Jaunt attendants had now reached the head of their aisle (they themselves were near the foot), Mark Oates paused a moment to reflect. His daughter, who knew less, had nevertheless listened to her heart and asked the right question. Therefore, it was his son's question he chose to answer.

The first human Jaunters had not been astronauts or test pilots; they were convict volunteers who had not even been screened with any particular interest in their psychological stability. In fact, it was the view of the scientists now in charge (and Carew

was not one of them; he had become what is commonly called a titular head) that the freakier they were, the better; if a mental spaz could go through and come out all right—or at least, no worse than he or she had been going in—then the process was probably safe for the executives, politicians, and fashion models of the world.

Half a dozen of these volunteers were brought to Province, Vermont (a site which had since become every bit as famous as Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, had once been), gassed, and fed through portals exactly two land-miles apart, one by one.

Mark told his children this, because of course all six of the volunteers came back just fine and feeling perky, thank you. He did not tell them about the purported *seventh* volunteer. This figure, who might have been real, or myth, or (most probably) a combination of the two, even had a name: Randall Foggia. Foggia was supposed to have been a convicted murderer, sentenced to death in the state of Florida for the murders of four old people at a Sarasota bridge party. According to the apocrypha, the combined forces of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Effa Bee Eye had come to Foggia with a unique, one-time, take-it-or-leave-it, absolutely-not-to-be-repeated offer: Take the Jaunt aside awake. Come through okay and we put your pardon, signed by Governor Thurgood, in your hand. Out you walk, free to follow the One True Cross or to off a few more old folks playing bridge in their yellow pants and white shoes. Come through dead or insane, tough city. What do you say?

Foggia, who understood that Florida was one state that really meant business about the death penalty and whose lawyer had told him that he was in all probability the next to ride Old Sparky, said okay.

Enough scientists to fill a jury box (with four or five left over as alternates) were present on the Great Day in the summer of 2007, but if the Foggia story was true—and Mark Oates believed it probably was, in essence—he doubted if any of the scientists had talked, more likely it had been one or more of the guards who had flown with Foggia from Raiford to Montpelier and then escorted him from Montpelier to Province.

"If I come through this alive," Foggia is reported to have said, "I want a chicken dinner before I blow this joint." He then stepped through Portal One and reappeared at Portal Two immediately.

He came through alive, but Randall Foggia was in no condition to eat his chicken dinner. In the space of time it took to Jaunt across the two miles (pegged at 0.0000000000067 of a second by computer), Foggia's hair had turned snow white. His face had not changed in any physical way—it was not lined or jowly or wasted—but it gave the impression of great, almost incredible age. Foggia shuffled out of the por-

**Foggia's hair had turned
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but it gave the
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tal, his eyes bulging blankly, his mouth twitching, his hands splayed out in front of him. Presently he began to drool. The scientists who had gathered around drew away from him and no, Mark really doubted if any of them had talked; they knew about the rats, after all, and the guinea pigs, and the hamsters; any animal, in fact, with more brains than your average flatworm. They must have felt a bit like those German scientists who tried to impregnate Jewish women with the sperm of German shepherds.

"What happened?" one of the scientists shouted (is reputed to have shouted). It was the only question Foggia had a chance to answer.

"It's eternity in there," he said, and dropped dead of what was diagnosed as a massive heart attack.

The scientists foregathered there were left with his corpse (which was neatly taken care of by the CIA and the Ef'a Bee Eye) and that strange and somehow awful dying declaration: *It's eternity in there.*

Daddy, I want to know what happened to the mice," Patty repeated. The only reason she had a chance to ask again was because the man in the expensive suit and the Eterna-Shine shoes had developed into something of a problem for the Jaunt attendants. He didn't really want to take the gas, and was disguising it with a lot of bluff, bully-boy talk. The attendants were doing their job as well as they could—smiling, cajoling, persuading—but it had slowed them down.

Mark sighed. He had opened the subject—only as a way of distracting his children from the pre-Jaunt festivities, it was true, but he *had* opened it—and now he supposed he would have to close it as truthfully as he could without alarming them or upsetting them.

He would not tell them, for instance, about C. K. Summers's book, *The Politics of the Jaunt*, which contained one section called "The Jaunt Under the Rose," a compendium of the more believable rumors about the Jaunt. The story of Randall Foggia, he of the bridge club murders and the uneaten chicken dinner, was in there. There were also case histories

of some other thirty (or more ... or less ... or who knows) volunteers, scapegoats, or madmen who had Jaunted wide awake over the last three hundred years. Most of them arrived at the other end dead; the rest were hopelessly insane. In some cases, the act of reemerging had actually seemed to shock them to death.

Summers's section of Jaunt rumors and apocrypha contained other unsettling intelligence as well: the Jaunt had apparently been used several times as a murder weapon. In the most famous (and only documented) case, which had occurred a mere thirty years ago, a Jaunt researcher named Lester Michaelson had tied up his wife with their daughter's plexiplast Dreamropes and pushed her, screaming, through the Jaunt portal at Silver City, Nevada. But before doing it, Michaelson had pushed the Nil button on his Jaunt board, erasing each and every one of the hundreds of thousands of possible Jaunt portals through which Mrs. Michaelson might have emerged—anywhere from neighboring Reno to the experimental Jaunt station on Io, one of the Jovian moons. So there was Mrs. Michaelson, Jaunting forever somewhere out there in the ozone. Michaelson's lawyer, after Michaelson had been held sane and able to stand trial for what he had done (within the narrow limits of the law, perhaps he was, but in any practical sense, Lester Michaelson was just as mad as a hatter), had offered a novel defense: his client could not be tried for murder because no one could prove conclusively that Mrs. Michaelson was dead.

This had raised the terrible specter of the woman, discorporeal but somehow still sentient, screaming in limbo ... forever. Michaelson was convicted and executed.

In addition, Summers suggested, the Jaunt had been used by various tinpot dictators to get rid of political dissidents and political adversaries: some thought that the Mafia had their own illegal Jaunt stations, tied into the central Jaunt computer through their CIA connections. It was suggested that the Mafia used the Jaunt's Nil capability to get rid of bodies which, unlike that of the unfortunate Mrs. Michaelson, were already dead. Seen in that light, the Jaunt became the ultimate Jimmy Hoffa machine, ever so much better than the local gravel pit or quarry.

All of this had led to Summers's conclusions and theories about the Jaunt; and that, of course, led back to Patty's persistent question about the mice.

"Well," Mark said slowly, as his wife signaled with her eyes for him to be careful, "even now no one really knows," Patty. But all the experiments with animals—including the mice—seemed to lead to the conclusion that while the Jaunt is almost instantaneous *physically*, it takes a long, long time mentally.

"I don't get it," Patty said glumly. "I knew I

wouldn't."

But Ricky was looking at his father thoughtfully. "They went on thinking," he said. "The test animals. And so would we, if we didn't get knocked out."

"Yes," Mark said. "That's what we believe now."

Something was dawning in Ricky's eyes. Fright? Excitement? "It isn't just teleportation, is it, Dad? It's some kind of time-warp."

It's eternity in there, Mark thought.

"In a way," he said. "But that's a comic-book phrase, it sounds good but doesn't really mean anything, Rick. It seems to revolve around the idea of consciousness, and the fact that consciousness doesn't particulate—it remains whole and constant. It also retains some screwy sense of time. But we don't know how pure consciousness would measure time, or even if that concept has any meaning to pure mind. We can't even conceive what pure mind might be."

Mark fell silent, troubled by his son's eyes, which were suddenly so sharp and curious. *He understands but he doesn't understand,* Mark thought. Your mind can be your best friend; it can keep you amused even when there's nothing good on the View when there's nothing to read, nothing to do. But it can turn on you when it's left with no input for too long. It can turn on you, which means that it turns on itself, savages itself, perhaps consumes itself in an unthinkable act of auto-cannibalism. How long in there, in terms of years? 0.000000000067 seconds for the body to Jaunt, but how long for the unparticulated consciousness? A hundred years? A thousand? A million? A billion? How long alone with your thoughts in an endless field of white? And then, when a billion eternities have passed, the crashing return of light and form and body. Who wouldn't go insane?

"Ricky—" he began, but the Jaunt attendants had arrived with their cart.

"Are you ready?" one asked.

Mark nodded.

"Daddy, I'm scared," Patty said in a thin voice.

"Will it hurt?"

"No, honey, of course it won't hurt," Mark said, and his voice was calm enough, but his heart was beating a little fast—it always did, although this would be something like his twenty-fifth Jaunt. "I'll go first and you'll see how easy it is."

The Jaunt attendant looked at him questioningly. Mark nodded and made a smile. The mask descended. Mark took it in his own hands and breathed deep of the dark.

The first thing he became aware of was the hard black Martian sky as seen through the top of the dome which surrounded Whitehead City. It was night here, and the stars sprawled with a fiery bril-

liance undreamed of on earth.

The second thing he became aware of was some sort of disturbance in the recovery room—mutterers, then shouts, then a shrill scream. *Oh dear God, that's Marilyn!* he thought, and struggled up from his Jaunt couch, fighting the waves of dizziness.

There was another scream, and he saw Jaunt attendants running toward their couches, their bright red jumpers flying around their knees. Marilyn staggered toward him, pointing. She screamed again, and then collapsed on the floor, sending an unoccupied Jaunt couch rolling slowly down the aisle with one weakly clutching hand.

But Mark had already followed the direction of her pointing finger. He had seen. It hadn't been fright in Ricky's eyes; it had been excitement. He should have known, because he knew Ricky—Ricky, who had fallen out of the highest crotch of the tree in their back yard in Schenectady when he was only seven, who had broken his arm (and was lucky that had been all he'd broken); Ricky who dared to go faster and further on his Slideboard than any other kid in the neighborhood; Ricky who was first to take any dare. Ricky and fear were not well-acquainted.

Until now.

Beside Ricky, his sister still mercifully slept. The thing that had been his son bounced and writhed on its Jaunt couch, a twelve-year-old boy with a snow white fall of hair and eyes which were incredibly ancient, the corneas gone a sickly yellow. Here was a creature older than time masquerading as a boy; and yet it bounced and writhed with a kind of horrid, obscene glee, and at its choked, lunatic ruckles the Jaunt attendants drew back in terror. Some of them fled, although they had been trained to cope with just such an unthinkable eventuality.

The old-young legs twitched and quivered. Claw hands beat and twisted and danced on the air, abruptly they descended and the thing that had been his son began to claw at its face.

"Longer than you think, Dad!" it cackled. "Longer than you think! Held my breath when they gave me the gas! Wanted to see! I saw! I saw! Longer than you think!"

Cackling and screeching the thing on the Jaunt couch suddenly clawed its own eyes out. Blood gouted. The recovery room was an aviary of screaming voices now.

"Longer than you think, Dad! I saw! I saw! Long Jaunt! Longer than you think—"

It said other things before the Jaunt attendants were finally able to bear it away, rolling its couch swiftly away as it screamed and clawed at the eyes that had seen the unseeable forever and ever; it said other things, and then it began to scream, but Mark Oates didn't hear it because by then he was screaming himself. **12**

Boucher Back-to



SUMMER'S CLOUD

*Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer's cloud
Without our special wonder?*

— Macbeth, act III, scene 1

alter Hancock was not superstitious. He said so to his wife when they walked on either side of a post on their way from the little Italian pension to the railway station. And he said so to his table companion at dinner that evening, when he had drunk a glass more than usual to prove that he was a bachelor for the night. This, of course, was why he had spilled the salt—or perhaps it was because his table companion spoke with a strange accent and wore a low-necked gown. He could not decide which intrigued him the more, and took another glass of wine to find out. He decided upon the gown, or at least . . . Well, yes—the gown.

Giuseppe, proprietor of the pension, looked surprised and not altogether pleased when Mr. Hancock danced with his table companion after dinner. The proprietor was talking excitedly with his wife Maria when the two guests came off the balcony out of the Italian moonlight. Maria passed near to them and looked at Mr. Hancock very closely. Especially at his throat.

Giuseppe was still displeased when Mr. Hancock ordered brandy. But Mr. Hancock was very well pleased indeed when the brandy came. The growth of his familiarity with his companion's accent kept even pace with the alcoholic dulling of his perceptions, so that her speech still remained vague but fascinating. The movements of the dance had made her other fascination much more clear to him.

It was in the dark hall that she told him she would leave her door open. He was not quite sure of what she said, but the welcome which his lips and hands received reassured him.

Nor was his assurance shaken when he met Maria at the head of the stairs. But he was puzzled. Even his slight knowledge of Italian sufficed to make clear that she was delivering a physical warning, not a moral reprimand. The morals of her lodgers were none

of her affair, she kept saying; or were the repetitions merely within his brain? That was nonsense, but it was what she said. At least he thought so; *la morte* was "death," wasn't it?

He was still puzzled when she went away, and looked curiously at the little gold cross which she had pressed into his hand with such urgent instructions.

Giuseppe and Maria were not puzzled when Mr. Hancock's companion was not in her room the next morning. She was, in fact, nowhere in the pension; and Giuseppe advanced the theory, with which Maria agreed, that she was nowhere in Italy.

They were only slight puzzled when they found Mr. Hancock's body on her bed. There were no clothes outside his flesh, and no blood inside. Nor was there a trace of blood anywhere in the room.

Although they jointly resolved that even her liberal payments could not induce them to accept Mr. Hancock's companion as a guest again, Maria's conscience felt clear when she found the small gold cross in the hall where Mr. Hancock had obviously tossed it in scorn.

You see, he was not superstitious.



THE WAY I HEARD IT

They were telling ghost stories. It was an odd assortment of guests; but then, you expected that at Martin's. There were an actress and a reporter and a young doctor who made amateur films and an elderly professor of English and several just plain people. Martin finished the one about the female medical student, and they were all duly horrified, even though you couldn't call it a ghost story proper. Somebody threw another log on the fire, and there was a pause for refilling glasses.

Then the actress spoke. "Now I know this one is true," she said, "because the girl who told it to me heard it from a man who knew the cousin of one of the people it happened to. So there."

"What you call direct evidence," the reporter murmured.

The actress didn't hear him. "It happened in Berkeley," she went on. "It seems these people were driving up in the hills on a dark, dark night, when all of a sudden they heard--only I ought to tell you about the car first of all. You see, it was a two-door sedan--you know, where you can't get out of the back without climbing over the people in front."

A man who worked in a travel office interrupted her. "Sorry, but I know this one. Only it happened in New Orleans. A friend of mine who's a steward on a boat--"

"That must be something else. I tell you I know this happened in Berkeley."

"I heard it in San Francisco," the reporter put in. "A friend of mine tried to run the story down, but he didn't get anywhere."

"Don't quarrel, children," Martin said. "It is a Berkeley legend; I've heard it a dozen times up there. And I don't know where else it might be current. Let's go on to a new story."

The doctor objected. "But I don't know it. And besides, I'm looking for something for a short supernatural picture. Would this do, do you think?"

"It might at that."

"Then somebody tell it."

"Yes," said the professor of English. "By all means tell it."

The actress unruffled herself. "All right. Now please be quiet, everybody. These people were driving up in the hills--"

"A doctor and his wife," the reporter added.

"I've heard a clergyman," Martin said.

"I don't think that matters. Anyway, they heard these moans, so they stopped the car. And there under a hedge--"

"The way I heard it," the travel man protested, "she was standing on the curb."

"But don't you see, she has to be lying down, because she's really-- But that would spoil the story, wouldn't it? I'm sorry. So they go over to her and help her into the car..."

"Don't forget the suitcase."

"What suitcase?"

"But she *has* to have a suitcase, because--"

"I don't see why."

The doctor was getting impatient. "For the

**"Don't you see?
It was his wife that
he'd murdered."
"That's screwy,"
said the reporter.
"It was his daughter."**

Lord's sake, will somebody tell this story? I don't give a hang about suitcases. I want to hear what happened."

Three people started at once. The actress won out and went on. "So they ask her where they can take her, and she says she doesn't know."

"She doesn't know! But that kills the whole—"

"Of course, how can you—"

"Please," said the professor quietly.

"She doesn't know then," the actress continued calmly. "She tells them later. Oh, I should say that they put her in the back seat. You have to know that. Then she tells them where to take her—she's very pale, of course, and beautiful and sad—and they take her there. And when they drive up to the house—"

"Only first they notice—"

"No, not till they get there."

"Well, the way I heard it..."

"Let's hear her version first," Martin suggested. "Then you can argue."

"So they look around, and she isn't there anymore. And you see, there isn't any way she could have got out without their knowing it, because the car was a two-door thing. That's why I had to tell you about that. And it looks impossible, and they're worried; but they go up to the house anyway. And a man answers the doorbell, and he asks what the matter—"

"No!" the reporter broke in sharply. "He says, 'I know why you have come.'"

The actress thought. "Yes. I guess you're right. He says, 'Don't tell me why you've come.' Only they tell him anyway, which is just what people always do. And he says, 'Yes. You're the tenth people'—that sounds silly, doesn't it?—you're the tenth people who've brought her here."

"Only what he *really* said," the travel man explained, "is, 'She's come here every night for a month now.'"

"But why?" the doctor asked. "What's it all about? You'd have to know the story back of it to do anything with it."

"Don't you see? It was his wife that he'd murdered."

"That's screwy," said the reporter. "It was his daughter. She was coming home from school and was killed in an accident at that spot and was trying to finish her journey home. That's why the suitcase."

"It was his daughter all right," the travel man said, "but the way I heard it, she'd taken poison and then changed her mind and tried to get home, only she was dead."

"Humph," the doctor said.

"You see," Martin explained, "you've got your choice. Anything will do for your picture. That's the way with legends."

It is indeed a curious legend," the professor observed, "and one deserving scholarly study. Mr. Woolcott, I believe, dealt with it on the air, and I happen to have given it some further attention myself. I think I might be able to reconcile your variant versions."

"Ooh," said the actress. "Go on."

The fire crackled and shone on the glasses. "It is basically a Berkeley legend," the professor said, "though it seems to have spread far from there. In the original form, the suitcase is correct, and so is the girl's lying down. The people in the car are variously described—I think because it occurred to various people."

The actress gave a stage shudder. "You mean it's *real*?"

"He means it may have several independent sources," Martin enlightened her.

"Of the explanations, yours, sir, is the most nearly accurate," the professor continued, nodding to the travel man. "It was the suicide of a daughter. She had been driven from her home because of the father's madly melodramatic suspicions of her affair with his assistant—which proved to have been quite innocent, if terribly sincere. She had loved her father dearly. Sorrow overcame her, and she took poison. But afterwards, she wanted to get home—to tell her father that he was forgiven."

"And did she ever tell him, if she never got there?"

"The visitations ceased," the professor said pedantically.

"And you found out all this from your researches?"

"Yes"—in a toneless voice.

The fire had almost died down. Now it flared up brightly and for a moment Martin could see the professor's face. He saw... and sat in shocked silence. He should have realized it before. There was no other way a man could know so much about it. Through the darkness, he could half see a smile on the old man's lips now. The old man was remembering that, after all, his daughter had forgiven him.

"It's a fair enough story," the doctor said at last. "But I still can't see it as a picture." **17**

100 Years of Fantasy Illustration

FROM DORÉ TO GOREY, ARTISTS' VISIONS HAVE SURPASSED THE WORDS THAT INSPIRED THEM.

by Stephen DiLauro

"What is the use of a book without pictures?" asked Alice, before descending into a Wonderland that has tried the talents of artists from Tenniel to Dali and Steadman.

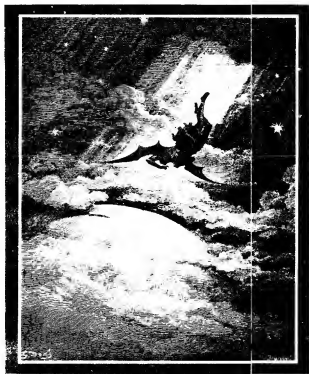
Alice wasn't alone. From the days of illuminated manuscripts, when saints, serpents, and laurel leaves adorned the letters of sacred texts, to the hip, irreverent comic strips of our own daily papers, most readers have preferred their words accompanied by pictures.

As its humblest and most common function, illustration offers the reader a helping hand. Even without their considerable artistic merit, for example, Doré's illustrations for *Paradise Lost* helped readers of his own day—as they still help us today—to visualize the events of the poem.

Yet illustrations are more than just a reading aid; they provide real pleasure—the intellectual pleasure of comparing our own conceptions of a work with those of the illustrator. How closely does Frazetta's vision of Burroughs match our own? What are the relative virtues of a hobbit depicted by Tim Kirk, as opposed to one drawn by Ralph Bakshi, the Brothers Hildebrandt, or Tolkien himself? Who better captures Toad of Toad Hall—a Rackham, a Shepard, or a Disney? And do the illustrations really enlarge our appreciation of the text?

Answering questions such as these provide a pleasure akin to the one we feel in evaluating the work of different directors as they stage the same familiar play.

But there is still another pleasure—as the following pages show. It is the sheer aesthetic pleasure that only art provides. For the best illustrators are, of course, more than that. They are artists—creators—in their own right.



Illustrating Satan's descent to Earth, the great French artist GUSTAVE DORÉ took a brief and unexceptional passage from Milton's *Paradise Lost*—

"...and toward the coast of Earth beneath

Down from the ecliptic, sped with hoped success,

Throws his steep flight in many an airy wheel..."

—and imbued it with a typically sweeping sense of grandeur and vast distance. Regarded even today as the quintessential illustrator of the Bible, *The Divine Comedy*, *Don Quixote*, and *Baron Munchausen*, Doré was held in such high esteem that, at age thirty-five, he saw the establishment of a Doré gallery in London. He died in 1883, aged fifty-one, at the height of his popularity.



The 1890s were the heyday of **AUBREY BEARDSLEY**, whose brief but brilliant career as a professional illustrator spanned a mere half dozen years, from 1892 until his death, at the age of twenty-six, in 1898. This vignette, endpiece for the English version of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, suggests why, during his lifetime, Beardsley was revered by some (his work exerted a profound influence on the Art Nouveau movement) and condemned by others as a pornographer.



The Strand, a magazine which in the 1890s introduced the world to Sherlock Holmes, commissioned **SIDNEY SIME** to create illustrations such as the one above for H. E. Gowers' *Haschisch Hallucinations* in the December 1905 issue. Already established as a major fantasy illustrator, Sime was at this time living in seclusion in the English countryside. In years to come his artwork for the exotic fantasy tales of Lord Dunsany would attract the attention of young H. P. Lovecraft, who modeled his own early work on Dunsany's.

Reproduced from George Locke's *From an Ultimate Dim Thule*
© Ferret Fantasy Ltd. 1973



The first decades of this century saw the rise of an artist who, for many, remains the master illuminator of children's stories and fairy tales—**ARTHUR RACKHAM**. Though Rackham is remembered mainly for his idyllic, colorful pastorals of sprites and fairies, this black-and-white drawing—a 1913 Mother Goose illustration—shows his skillful manipulation of space and line. The giant of the drawing might provoke no more than smiles from an adult, but whatever its intention, it effectively terrified small children. Rackham continued working as a painter, illustrator, and stage set designer until his death in 1939.

From *Fantasy* by Brigid Peppin.

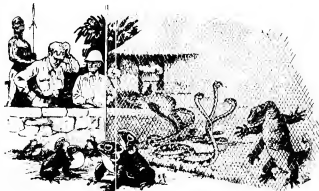
© Carter Nash Cameron / Watson Gupilli Publications 1975



Though noted primarily as a humorist, **W. HEATH ROBINSON**, who flourished in the same period as Arthur Rackham, was never averse to turning his pen and ink to fantasy—as here in a 1914 illustration for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Influenced by both Beardstley and Sime, Robinson's drawings accompanied the work of writers from Rabelais to Poe.

From *Fantasy* by Brigid Peppin.

© Carter Nash Cameron / Watson Gupilli Publications 1975



This 1927 illustration for Julian Huxley's story "The Tissue Culture King" suggests that, while Sime's grotesque creatures owed their existence to a hashish dream, two decades later the world was ready for a more scientific explanation. Science—and its technological marvels, complete with nuts and bolts—was the special province of **FRANK R. PAUL**, whose work dominated both the covers and inside pages of the early *Amazing Stories*. No other artist has had as enduring an effect on the field of futuristic illustration.

From *One Hundred Years of Science Fiction* illustration by Anthony Frewin © Jupiter Books Ltd 1974



The art world of the 1920s saw two explosive movements, the Dadaists and the Surrealists—and **MAX ERNST** was a leading figure in both. The above illustration comes from his surreal "novel" *Une Semaine de Bonté* (*A Week of Kindness*), published in 1933. Its narrative is composed almost entirely of collages made from magazine and novel illustrations of the nineteenth century: Ernst himself claimed that it was exposure to a book of Dore's etchings that inspired *Semaine*, and indeed the figure's wings might once have graced a Satan.

From *Une Semaine de Bonté* by Max Ernst © Dover Publications, Inc. 1976



STEPHEN LAWRENCE drew this illustration for the *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* June 1949 reprint of M. P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud*, whose hero returns from a polar journey to discover that he is the last man on earth, the rest of humanity having died beneath a cloud of poison gas. Shiel's novel had first been published in England in 1901, but its apocalyptic vision took on new meaning for readers in the atomic age.

From "Terror" by Peter Haining © Peter Haining and Pictorial Presentations 1976



For nearly three decades VIRGIL FINLAY was fantasy's supreme stylist. His beautiful compositions, many of which made use of a painstakingly slow stipple technique, graced the celebrated pulp magazine *Weird Tales* (where his first professional work appeared in 1935), as well as other magazines in the genre, until shortly before his death in 1971 at the age of fifty-six. Finlay frequently adorned his drawings with lush female forms; the illustration above, for Jack Mann's "Her Ways Are Death" (1952), is thus one of his more savage creations.

Courtesy Getty de la Ree, *The Book of Virgil Finlay* © 1975 by Beverly C. Finlay.



The so-called psychedelic revolution of the late 1960s saw the advent of "head comics" aimed at college-age audiences and adults, and usually originating on the West Coast. They brought a new frankness to matters of sex, drugs, and social satire, and introduced such subversive talents as R. Crumb, S. Clay Wilson, Robert Williams, Gilbert Shelton and **RICK GRIFFIN**, here represented by a dizzyingly organic design which, with its menacing nails and fangs, seems almost to anticipate the Giger of 1979's *Alien*.

From *Zap Comix* No. 2, c. Apex Novelties 1968, reprinted courtesy of Bob Rita, The Print Mint



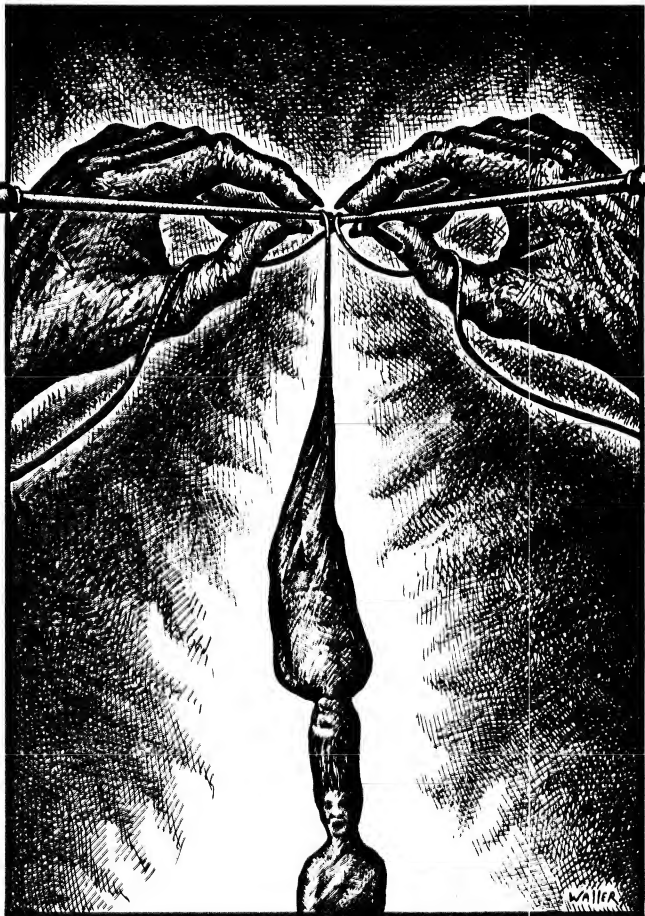
LEE BROWN COYE's penchant for the macabre and the downright gruesome dates back to his medical school days during the Depression, when—like the American painter Ivan Albright—he gained experience in drawing by taking as his subject matter dissections and cadavers. Coye rose to prominence in the 1940s through his illustrations in *Weird Tales*, then went on to illustrate Lovecraft's fiction for the Wisconsin publishing firm Arkham House and, most recently, the stories of pulp writer Hugh B. Cave for the 1977 Carcosa collection *Murgunstrumm and Others*, from which the above illustration is taken.

© Carcosa 1977, courtesy Lee Brown Coye and Karl Edward Wagner



Few modern illustrators have a style as immediately identifiable as **EDWARD GOREY**, who, along with Charles Addams, Lee Brown Coye, and Gahan Wilson, specializes in a distinctive kind of dark humor. The 1970s saw him become an authentic cult hero with dozens of original books bearing his name, to say nothing of pins, stuffed animals, a Gorey calendar, and the sets for the Broadway production of *Dracula*. Gorey's work hearkens back to the grimmest of Victorian picture books, but as one observer has noted, "beneath the sophistication and stylization there is a vulnerable innocence—a kind of baffled and helpless awareness of the unhappy things fate holds in store for so many."

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THE ASSIGNMENT

by Mitch Potter

WHY WAS THE OLD LADY SO INTERESTED IN ODD WAYS TO DIE?

Chad Tolliver chewed on the end of his pen and tried to think of just three more horrible ways that he might die. The ideas came easily.

111. *Death caused by a falling satellite that drops through the roof and smashes me at the dinner table.*

112. *Death caused by lightning which strikes the telephone line, travels down the wire, and fries me through the receiver.*

113. *Death caused by a herd of escaped laboratory rats that lock me in a cage and force me to drink diet soda until I drown.*

Chad stopped writing and glanced at his watch. He was surprised to find only five minutes left in the period. Seeing his classmates all still hard at work was equally shocking. Most of the busy-work teachers handed out to eat up time during the first day of classes became tick-tack-toe boards minutes after it hit the desks.

This assignment was different. Miss Moorey, the new Ancient History 101 instructor, had asked them to dream up one hundred ways that they could be killed in everyday life. Wildly imaginative methods were what she wanted. No plane crashes. No lung cancer.

The general studies course at Rock Valley Junior College was half female, and the women had all pretended they were about to gag when the assignment had been made. Chad noticed that the groaners were working as diligently as anyone else on the gruesome chore. He shivered slightly at the thought of the terrible carnage being described by the eighteen softly scratching pens.

The period ended at 11:45 A.M. Chad stopped by his car to pick up his sack lunch, then hustled across the hilly campus to the crowded cafeteria to find his friends.

"If it isn't our second celebrity of the day," Doug Holmgren said as Chad took a seat. "First we had the Wicked Witch of the West's great-grandmother teaching ancient history, and now we get a visit from Bob Barker's illegitimate kid."

Chad was used to such razzing from friend and foe alike. No matter how he cut or combed his hair, he continued to look amazingly like a young version of the perennial game show host. Still, the sin couldn't go unpunished. He tossed a notebook and crunched one of the six bags of Fritos that made up Holmgren's standard lunch.

He had been friends with Holmgren and their third tablemate, Dave Strand, since high school.

Holmgren was a lanky Adonis who captained the junior college's basketball team, while Strand, the smallest and smartest of the trio, was a bookworm type whose thin face looked incomplete without a pair of Coke-bottle glasses. His vision was, in fact, flawless, but he seldom went anywhere without the clear pair his two friends had given him as a gag.

"I guess Miss Moorey is only a temporary replacement," Strand said. "Virgil Alderson was listed as the teacher in the program book, but he died a few days ago when his liver decided not to put up with any more alcohol. I hope she comes up with more decent assignments like that work sheet today."

"It was fun thinking up sick ways to bite the dust," Holmgren agreed, "but I wouldn't mind if a foxy young lady took that living prune's place. Preferably a divorcee who doesn't believe in bras."

"Moorey was probably quite the fox herself, back around Julius Caesar's time," Chad said. "Maybe we'll get to read some love letters he sent her."

"I'll read anything, if she'll just stop that damned knitting or whatever it was," Strand complained. "I swear she never let go of it once during the hour."

Chad realized that he had barely noticed the green plastic bag full of thread on the history teacher's desk. She had worked on it with her needles and scissors for the entire period. It had seemed like such a natural, grandmotherly activity for her that the ever-observant Strand had been the only one to pay much attention.

"Wonder what she's making that's so important," Chad thought out loud.

"Just a new outfit for herself, I'll bet. That rag she was wearing looked old enough to have come from the Pompeii K-Mart." Holmgren said as he smashed Chad's bologna sandwich in a retaliatory strike with an accounting book.

Strand quickly changed the subject in an attempt to keep the conflict from spilling over onto his lunch tray. "You planning to try the famous Chad Tolliver Teacher Control Technique on this old lady? She might not fall for it, you know."

"Haven't found a teacher yet who I couldn't manipulate into my trap," Chad said proudly. "I started setting Miss Moorey up this morning by turning in thirteen extra ways to die on that twisted assignment."

Using variations of the same scheme during his high school career, Chad had compiled an almost perfect A average while doing virtually no work. The

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instructors during his first year at the junior college had been even easier to fool. His friends urged the wily nineteen-year-old to patent his technique and retire to the beaches of Jamaica.

During the first two weeks of a class with a new instructor, Chad would sit in the front row, be perfectly attentive, and do as much extra work as humanly possible. Being Bob Barker's twin was an added advantage, since teachers always responded positively to the pleasant face they had seen giving away thousands of dollars in prizes on television.

The metamorphosis would begin at the end of two weeks. Chad would show up late, stop turning in homework, and exhibit classroom behavior that alternated between sullen disrespect and sleep. Teachers couldn't help but notice that the brightest student in class had burned out and been replaced by a cross between John Travolta and a zombie.

Chad knew that any teacher who had taken the right educational psychology classes would peg him as a smart kid being tormented by a personal problem. The concerned teachers almost always took his bait and set themselves up for the crucial part of the con by arranging a private meeting.

Those earnest discussions began with his promising work, moved to his recent turnaround, and then probed for the home- or love-life crisis that was responsible. Artfully using words that said everything was fine while his tone and expression said the opposite, Chad would stall until the perfect moment; then, choking back tears and groping for words, he'd confide that he had just learned his mother was working as a prostitute.

He loved the hooker story. It so reeked of social stigma that Chad couldn't imagine any teacher calling home to verify that his mother was really turning tricks.

Most teachers tried to pawn off Chad's touchy problem on one of the school's counselors. He blocked that escape route by claiming the head of the counseling department as a family friend—one who would certainly hear about his mother's disgusting occupation if the word got around school.

Trapped into keeping his secret, the teachers, especially the young ones, really got involved in the psychologist role. The troubled student, meanwhile, would be doing zero work during all the great counseling.

At semester's end, Chad only had to clean up his act and repeat his stellar performance of the first two weeks, crediting each of the teachers he was conning with his comeback. His unusual situation was always taken into account when grades came out. A semester of failing work had never earned him less than a B-plus.

Chad guessed that Miss Moorey was so old that she'd been trained before teachers were re-

quired to take psychology courses, but this didn't worry him. As long as she was human, he knew his plan would work.

The funeral was over by midafternoon. Chad wished he had avoided the depressing affair, even though Cindy Wiles had been a close friend during high school. He did decide to avoid his afternoon classes, and drove home in the light September drizzle that had made the service at the cemetery even more dreary.

Everyone at the funeral had been repeating silly clichés like "We all have to go sometime" and nodding as if that thought comforted them somehow. It didn't make Chad feel any better at all. He hoped his time would never come, especially not in as disturbing a fashion as Cindy's.

For no apparent reason, the young woman had swerved out of control while driving down a hill on a dry fall afternoon. The impact of the car slamming into a telephone pole had snapped off the radio antenna. The metal missile had shot through the broken windshield to spear the young blonde's heart.

The bizarre accident shocked Chad more than anyone else because it was no surprise to him. It had been included as an entry on the "One Hundred Ways to Die" work sheet he'd completed for Miss Moorey's history class a week before Cindy's body was found skewered in the front seat of her car like the victim of a fanatical disk jockey with a crossbow.

Throughout the funeral, Chad felt more like the judge who had pronounced Cindy's death sentence than a mourner. He was torn between feeling guilty and being pleasantly awed at his sudden ability to predict the future.

Luckily, there was no time to dwell on the grisly coincidence after he got home. His transformation from the studious Dr. Jekyll to the lazy Mr. Hyde was only a few days away. Grabbing the ancient-history text off the top of the pile on his bed, Chad flipped ahead to a chapter that dealt with cultural borrowing in the ancient world. The prime example was Roman plagiarism of Greek myths.

As he skimmed the pages, only one of the stolen myths caught Chad's attention. It dealt with the Fates or, as they were also known, the Three Weird Sisters. The Romans referred to them as *Parcae*, the Greeks as *Moirai*. These three old hags sat in a cave somewhere near Greece and controlled men's destinies. According to the myth, they did the job in voodoo fashion by spinning a thread to represent every human life.

Clotho (whose name meant "Spinner") produced the threads. They were then given to Lachesis ("Disposer of Lots") who decided the pattern of each life and set its length. Atropos ("Inflexible") did the final cutting of the thread that brought life to an end.

"We all have to go sometime." But Chad hoped his time would never come, especially not in as disturbing a fashion as Cindy's.

The employment agency the women had gone to in order to find such morbid jobs wasn't mentioned. The myth did say that they performed with great dedication; even though their father was king of the gods (Jupiter to the Romans and Zeus to the Greeks), he couldn't get his offspring to alter a decision. Since they had a human mother, the three weren't immortal the way full-fledged gods were, but they couldn't be threatened with death because they controlled their own threads.

Chad read the myth four times before realizing what had turned his stomach to ice. Nowhere did the book explain whose job it was to decide *how* people were to die.

Much too elementary, my dear Tolliver," Strand said the next day at lunch, after reading the chapter and hearing Chad's crazy theory. "If Atropos left her cave, she'd find something better to do than play schoolteacher, for God's sake. And she'd pick a less obvious name. Miss Moorey sounds too much like the Greek name for those bards."

"But that fits in with my explanation," Chad argued. "I think she left the cave in the first place because she was burned out. Anybody's imagination would falter after a few thousand years of thinking up ways to kill people. If we assume she's got a dead battery in the creativity circuit, can we really expect her to whip up a first-class plan to find new ideas? Or to think of a decent alias?"

"But a schoolteacher!"

"Only a substitute, remember?" Chad said. "She knows her history from first-hand observation rather than reading. Probably never hangs around one place too long. Not many administrators will even look at her faked certification. They'll just be happy to have her there to keep the class from being canceled. She uses that assignment to sucker her students into giving her a few thousand new ways to do her dirty work, and then she's off to the next school to repeat the process. Probably been doing it for years. For all we know, having that nutty cult in South America commit mass suicide might have come from a work sheet in a class like ours."

"You're forgetting one thing," said Holmgren, who had been munching thoughtfully on his Fritos during the argument. "If you assume Miss Moorey is

one of the Fates, you have to also assume that her sisters exist."

His companions nodded.

"That means Litchi Nut, or whatever her name was, is sitting in her cave right now controlling the course of Tolliver's life. I can't imagine her allowing him to blow the whistle on her sister. Therefore, the very fact that Tolliver *could* figure out that our history teacher is one of the Fates is positive proof that she isn't."

"Makes sense," Chad agreed, smiling in surprise at his friend's unusual burst of logic. "But how do you explain away that weird knitting Moorey does all day? She's obviously not making anything."

"My mother had an old uncle who had hardening of the arteries before he died," Holmgren said. "This dude wound up thinking he was Babe Ruth and drove the nursing home staff crazy pitching baseballs through the windows."

"Moorey probably knows that myth about the Fates as well as anyone," Strand said. "With more of her screws loosening up every year, it's possible that she's started thinking she *is* Atropos and acting accordingly."

Chad was relieved that his friends' logic had been able to unravel his insane theory of the previous night so easily. "Only thing worrying me now is that this hardening of the arteries stuff runs in your family, Dave. I saw you in the hall just this morning acting like you thought you were Casanova."

Holmgren's only answer was to pull a loose thread from his shirt and dangle it in the air. "Take that, Tolliver," he said, and punched the thread across the table.

The Chad Tolliver Teacher Control Technique went into effect on schedule during the third week of the semester. Miss Moorey noticed him slouching in the back row of the ancient-history class but made no comment. She stopped calling on him when he failed to answer her first three questions about the day's assignment.

Chad used the time he normally spent agonizing over the daily work to watch the mysterious teacher. It wasn't hard to understand how he could have accused her of being thousands of years old. Her narrow face was a plastic surgeon's nightmare carpeted with wall-to-wall wrinkles. The silver hair was standard, but her eyes looked enough like chips of black ice to prevent anyone from mistaking her for a friendly cookie-baking grandmother.

Her long, nimble fingers were what kept drawing Chad's gaze. Although she never seemed to be paying attention to the work in progress, the movements were always deft and precise. New threads were constantly being added to the pattern of what looked like a shaggy pot-holder. They dif-

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ferred in color, but all appeared to be the same length. Some would be cut immediately when she dropped a needle to pick up her scissors. Other threads would have individual fibers snipped and rearranged before being chopped off.

One swoop of the flashing scissors put an end to at least ten threads. Miss Moorey pulled two thick green specimens from her bulging sack to replace them.

Chad gasped.

The additions didn't look any different from the other green threads, but the effect on Chad was devastating. Every time the teacher's hand squeezed those strands, he felt his throat tighten. When a needle wound the pair into the pattern, he could have sworn his intestines were being stirred with a hot knife.

"Don't cut those!" Chad cried and then bit his lip. The rest of the class ignored him. They had been clued by Strand and Holmgren to expect odd behavior as part of his teacher control plan.

This time, though, Chad was the one being controlled. He held his breath and clenched his hands into helpless fists as the sharp scissors in Miss Moorey's practiced hand amputated half the vital threads.

Fifteen minutes later, Chad left the classroom very much alive. He joked at lunch about how convincing his new act had been. Only the hollow feeling in his chest kept him from forgetting that the terror hadn't been faked at all.

The call came at the beginning of his data processing class. Chad took it on the phone in the administrative office. Mrs. Erickson, his neighbor, told the story as best she could between her mumbles and sobs. He went right home.

What little was left of the bodies of Andrew and Diane Tolliver was still in the charred dining room. They had just been sitting down to eat lunch together on his father's day off. A dozen men with expensive calculators and puzzled faces were crowded round the crater that the deadly satellite had made in the basement.

At his second funeral in as many weeks, Chad didn't cry. He was too confused. One minute he felt like an accomplice in his parent's murders. The next minute he was hearing Strand and Holmgren explaining how the chain of events was a coincidence rather than a conspiracy.

He pretended as best he could to believe them.

Back in his bedroom in the silent house, Chad picked up the phone and practiced telling his wild theory to the police, the FBI, and the President. Twice the dial tone accused him of being on drugs. The third time it told a funny anecdote about an old man tossing baseballs through a nursing home win-

dow and suggested he forget the whole thing.

But Chad couldn't forget that his parents had been slaughtered. At least not until he knew for sure whether he had provided the murder method.

Miss Moorey lived near the campus, in a crumbling apartment building that was a haven for spinsters themselves on the verge of crumbling. The landlord wasn't in when Chad arrived. He lured the man's chubby wife away from the afternoon soap operas just long enough to hear his spiel. By claiming to be Miss Moorey's nephew from South Dakota, he managed to get himself into the teacher's apartment.

The living room was cool and a bit damp. The curtains were tightly drawn. Chad was surprised to see no bats hanging from the ceiling of what looked very much like a home-away-from-home.

The refrigerator, he discovered, hadn't even been plugged in. The kitchen cupboards were bare enough to qualify for Old Mother Hubbard's house.

There were no sheets or blankets on the bed, nor any in the closets. So many people had to be killed each day, he reasoned, that Atropos couldn't waste time on the luxury of eating or sleeping.

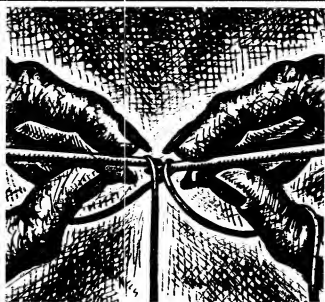
A thump outside the front door made Chad's blood freeze. It took him ten minutes to muster up the courage to check what was there. Two cardboard boxes, both half as tall as he was, had been left in the hallway. The markings showed that they'd been mailed from Greece.

Chad ripped open one box and found it tightly packed with thousands of threads. They were all about a foot long. He guessed that the other two Fates cut them all off at a safe length, say one hundred twenty-five years, and mailed a daily load to Atropos for final reckoning at the proper moment. No marking was obvious to show where any of the threads were to be cut. A telepathic link of some sort between the half-human three-some might be the method of passing information, Chad decided.

His train of thought was derailed by the opening of the building's front door. A faint sound of clacking needles told him that the school day was over. He pulled the two boxes inside the apartment.

Tired and confused as he was, Chad felt very powerful. Somehow he had managed to elude the controlling influence of the Fates. Lachesis would never have set the pattern of his life so he could discover her sister's secret. His thread must have slipped through her fingers by mistake. *Perhaps, Chad thought, I'm the only person in the world their quality control system has missed, the only one truly blessed with free will.*

Such power was too awesome to use foolishly, but too important to waste. Chad pushed the boxes full of humanity into a closet and ripped the cord off the base of an idle floor lamp. Then he crouched behind a tattered easy chair. Destroying Atropos would



be impossible without cutting her thread, he knew, but it would be easy enough to tackle the frail woman and hog-tie her. Atropos would eventually have to be allowed to return to her grim chores, simply to keep the population in balance, but not before Chad had found a way to stop her from ever cutting his own thread or those of his friends.

A key turned in the lock and the creature that called itself Miss Moorey pushed the apartment door open with one foot. Chad peeked from his hiding place to see his teacher's hands moving at incredible speed. Away from the gaze of her students, she had stepped up the pace of her killing to make sure the daily quota was achieved.

Chad was tensing his legs to pounce when the old hag made it clear she knew she wasn't alone. "I'm happy that you could pay me a visit, Chad," she said casually. "Very happy."

The hair on Chad's arms stood on end. He calmed himself quickly and stood up to meet his Fate. "How did you know I was in here?"

"Not important," Atropos said. "There are too many other things I have to tell you."

"You'll have plenty of time for confessions when I drag you and your threads to the police station to show them how you've killed my parents," Chad said, testing her susceptibility to blackmail.

Atropos laughed, her voice a dry cackle. "I've killed everyone's parents."

"It's nothing to be proud of!"

"I'm not bragging, lad," she said sharply. Her hands were suddenly still for the first time since Chad had met her. "Killing people bores me. It's bored me for a thousand years or so. I worked with my sisters to plan complicated wars and disasters, but that didn't help for long. Neither did leaving the cave to travel. Lately I hardly ever bother to rework the fibers the way I have to for a truly creative death. Heart attacks and strokes are so much easier."

She sounded so forlorn that Chad felt his fear and anger melting away. He steeled himself with the memory of his parents' charred bodies.

"Am I supposed to feel sorry for you?" Chad sneered. "Am I supposed to forgive you because

you're just some blue-collar goddess trapped on an assembly line of death?"

"No, you've done enough," Atropos said. "The challenge of using my skills to bring you here has been the only pleasure I've known for centuries."

Chad wanted to knock her down, to choke her scrawny neck. But all he could do was pass the cord from one sweating hand to the other. "Don't try to trick me," he ordered. "I came here on my own."

"My sister told me to kill Chad Tolliver three days after his fifth birthday," she said. "Your thread was a hundred and fifty years long, like all the rest, but it was blank after that execution date. I've used every second I could spare since then, reworking the fibers to make your life continue. Why do you think you're so different from everyone else?"

"I'm not that different!"

"You're a manipulator," she hissed. "A planner. I made you that way so you'd have the skills you'll need."

A huge spool of thread appeared from the folds of her dress. She spun it and allowed many yards to unravel before catching the exact spot she was looking for between the sharp blades of her scissors.

"Whose thread is that?" Chad asked, although he already knew.

"I've hidden your thread where no one will tamper with it before your hundred and fifty years are up," Atropos promised. Her cold eyes softened and she was looking at him almost fondly. "I made sure things will be very structured for quite a few years. You'll find that I've built more freedom in after you get the hang of how the system works—how it *has* to work. Near the end, you'll be able to set up a similar changeover."

Before Chad could protest, Atropos cut the thread she was holding. Smiling with genuine relief, she said, "Good luck on your new assignment," then she dissolved into dust, like so many horror movie endings.

Chad wanted very much to run from the damp, dark apartment. He opened the closet door instead. The boxes inside no longer had thread in them. Now they were overflowing with people.

Some of the doomed souls were in hospital beds. He could see others driving along busy freeways. A few were sitting down to the dinner table with no concern for what might be preparing to smash through the roof.

They were all waiting patiently for something terrible, something deadly, to end their uncertainty.

Chad reached into the box to make sure no one had to linger for long. A voice, one that sounded like it belonged to a horrified teenager, seemed to be screaming deep in his brain. The screams were easily drowned out by the soft, rhythmic clacking of the scissors.

The DREAMSHATTERING



by MARY KITTREDGE

HOW DO YOU CURE AN EPIDEMIC OF NIGHTMARES?

Shocked into a bloody rage, mink turned on their babies, ripping through a whole spring litter. Pecking parties flourished, leaving piles of spattered feathers in place of egg money. Cows aborted, a flock of turkeys dropped dead, and the dime-store window collapsed, guillotining a dozen Barbie dolls and smashing the gumball machine.

The government paid for it all. Hardly bothering to investigate before mailing the checks in their buff-colored envelopes, the government bought ruined feed and cracked foundations, and sent refrigerated trucks to haul the carcasses away.

In the fifties, the government told the truth. It was not a matter of trust; we simply knew it, especially in towns like Hancock, where the redcoats were still the best remembered enemy. And even now, when people here say, "the government," they mean the draft board or the farm bureau. After Vietnam, the boys who came back whole took out government loans and bought their acreage or, like my husband, went to school on the G.I. Bill. The Pentagon was a faraway place where invisible men kept dark secrets, to protect us.

We could hardly have protected ourselves. Most of the men had deer rifles, but the ammunition wouldn't have held out forever, and the only other gun was the V.F.W. cannon, bolted to a concrete block with a log jammed up its barrel.

At the town meetings two crisp, glib Air Force colonels had explained that it was not only the plane but a navigation system they were testing; that was why jets would be flying over at night. Sonic booms, they informed us, were annoying but not dangerous. By cooperating, Hancock would do its part for defense, and the government would pay for possible minor damage. They never precisely asked permission, but people felt they had; it was cleverly done.

Just as I picked up my coffee cup another boom shook the house; the planes had taken to making one last pass around seven-thirty each morning. *Just to show who's boss*, I thought, sipping up the puddle with a dishcloth, *just to let us know who's bought and sold around here*. Outside the kitchen window a row of icicles cracked off and dropped like daggers; beyond, a fluffy white vapor trail unfurled across the blue sky. Beneath the kitchen table, Molly, the cocker spaniel, moaned and shifted uneasily against her four sucking pups.

"Eggs," said Eric, rattling his high chair. "Eggs, eggs, eggs," he chanted, beating time with his curved baby spoon.

"Listen," said my husband, "I'll be in the lab tonight."

I looked up from dropping dollops of scrambled egg onto the high-chair tray. "David, I was up with him all last night."

The government did not pay for nightmares.

The government did not pay for sleep, except to subjects in my husband's laboratory at the medical center. There volunteers lay down every night to sleep for science and twenty-five dollars.

"I'm sorry," he said. "But I've got to be there. Some guys are coming up from Bethesda to observe. And during the day I've got to see patients, and write my new grant proposal, and—"

"Okay, okay." I set his plate of eggs in front of him. "It just sucks, that's all." He was sorry, I knew, but he had that "I can't help it, I'm a doctor" look on his face—guilty but determined.

"We should be finishing up tonight," he said. "God, I'm tired of watching people sleep. Wire 'em up and bed 'em down."

"I don't see how you can study much with those booms every night," I said. From under the table came tiny yelps of protest as Molly waddled away from her box to snuffle up Eric's dropped toast.

"Actually, they've turned out to be pretty useful." I made a face at him. "No, really," he said. "A random disturbance. Even we don't know when it's coming. At first they all woke up, but now they just twitch a little and start to dream. It's amazing, like flipping a switch." He gulped the rest of his coffee, gathered up his clipboard and stethoscope. "Anyway, it's over: One more night and it's write-up time."

"Cookie?" inquired Eric. "Candy, candy, bye-bye?"

"So long, sport," said my husband. "Listen," he said to me, "why don't you give him one of those pills tonight. They're in the cabinet. Then you can both get some sleep."

"Maybe," I said. "It seems a little extreme, doping him up that way."

"It's not dope," he said impatiently; he was late. "Insomnia can be treated with medication, like any other disease."

"Disease," said Eric clearly, spraying crumbs, and we all laughed, delighted at his new word.

My husband kissed us both goodbye, yawning, and when he was gone I stacked the dishes in the sink and turned to the immediate chore of getting dressed. Eric wore his overalls and his new red sweater with the reindeer on it, and I wore my jeans with the hole in them and a sweatshirt of my husband's—all I had clean, since I could no longer trust myself to stay awake in the laundromat. Guiding Eric's fingers through the buttons, I wished his grandmother would send me a red sweater with reindeer, or maybe a blue one, cashmere. A lacy crochet, I decided, with raglan sleeves—

"Out!" demanded Eric, stamping his small sneakered foot.

Luckily he chose to ride that morning, so I leaned on the stroller and put one foot in front of the other, which was all I had energy for anyway.

It was a bright clear morning, and the air was unusually sweet, as if somewhere close by flowers were already blooming, although it was only late February. We passed the grain elevator and the hardware store, and at the corner we waited for an old Ford pickup with a yellow snowplow blade on the front and a cord of stovewood in back. Eric laughed and waved as the chains on the oversize snow tires jingled by.

In the supermarket I picked out lettuce, bread, dog food, and sneaked Eric's choices—anchovies, pastel marshmallows—back onto the shelves. At the bakery counter Estelle gave Eric a gingerbread man whose red frosting smile dripped jaggedly into the chocolate jimmies of his collar.

"How about Pete Reynolds?" she said to me.

"What about him?" Estelle's day in the store was one long conversation, and like her pineapple upside-down cake, her gossip was juicy and reliable.

"Drowned. Walked in his sleep right into his own pasture pond. Lucky he was wearing red pajamas, they wouldn't have found him till spring. Barefoot in the snow—don't that just beat all?"

"It does seem strange," I began.

"Crazy, that's what it is. And then those chickens out to Paulson's—"

"Walked into the pond?"

Estelle gave me a scathing look. "Moths," she said. "Henhouse was just full up with 'em. Moths in winter, might've known they were wrong 'uns, but chickens are stupid that way. Ate 'em. Farm board men said it was a freak of nature." Estelle shook her head, her frown implying thoughts too dark to tell, then turned to slapping a batch of rolls into a pan.

"So what happened?"

"Hauled 'em all away, those chickens. No good to anybody like that. Stank like the dickens, I heard. I heard it's those booms doing it all, making everything go crazy around here." She shot me a strange sideways glance. I heard your husband knows the real story."

"What do you mean, the real story? He doesn't even—"

"Booms," she said again, musing darkly to herself. Her face looked puffy and doughy, like a batch of her own bread rising, and there were deep, shadowy crescents under her eyes. "Front window cracked right down the middle. My mother's cranberry glass all smashed. And when I do sleep I just dream like the devil."

She looked up from drizzling glaze over a pan of honey buns, a faint unfriendly challenge in her eyes. "My brother Lanny, he works up at the hospital, nights. He says those government men go around with your husband."

"Estelle, I think your brother was mistaken. My husband has nothing to do with the booms or the

Air Force. He just works on a government grant."

"Money is as money does," said Estelle shortly, turning away, and I leaned on Eric's stroller again until we bumped up against the meat counter.

Mr. DiAngelo was ready with a lollipop—purple, Eric's favorite—and though I could cheerfully deny Eric the candy, I could not deny Mr. DiAngelo the pleasure of giving it to him. "Boo-boo," Eric whispered reverently, plucking his prize from the butcher's gauze-wrapped hand.

"Fifty-three years and I never cut myself before." Behind him the big oiled knives stood in their rack; the cleaver gleamed by a pile of suet on the chopping block. "But yesterday I slipped, my hand almost went with the soup bones. I was tired." He shook his head. "My son is right, I'm an old man. I should stay home and take naps."

"Everyone here would miss you," I said. "Eric would miss you."

He wiped his hands on his apron. "You're a nice girl, you remind me of my daughter. But I know, I know. I even sleep like an old man. Dreams, only dreams." Aimlessly he rearranged a package of rib-eye steaks in the display case. His brown eyes, usually soft and moist as a spaniel's, hardened with recent human memories.

"Eric has nightmares," I said, "and he's not old."

"Nightmares, said Mr. DiAngelo sadly. "Baby dreams. Not like mine." I had a sudden, unwelcome vision of Mr. DiAngelo tangled in his nightshirt, moaning and sweating as the meat hooks hovered, knives marched, bone saws gnashed their teeth.

Baby dreams. I thought later as I stood by Eric's high chair piling edible building blocks in front of him. Bricks of cheese and pineapple, pillars of half-cooked carrot, all toppled together on a bread-and-butter foundation. He needed a lot of fuel these days; for the last week, I figured, he'd slept maybe four hours out of each twenty-four.

Eric pushed the last of the carrots into a pile and scattered them. It was a halfhearted gesture, though; as I hauled him from the chair I felt him lapse. He wouldn't sleep willingly; now, but had to be captured off guard, ambushed by exhaustion in broad daylight. Inevitably his feet caught in the high-chair tray and I staggered dangerously, so tired by then that any deviation from absolute vertical made me swoon.

At first I called them nightmares, and I remember thinking how well I was coping. Like teething, like his fear of strangers—for a while he shrieked at nice blue-haired old ladies on the street, hurting their feelings severely, though they tried not to show it—like the others, this colic would run its course. Any day now I might look for a toddler and find a schoolboy in faded denim; high on my closet

**"NO MORE TIGERS,"
I TOLD ERIC
AS I CRUSHED
THE SMALL WHITE
PILL TO POWDER.
"I'M GOING TO
TAKE AWAY YOUR
DREAMS."**

shelf was a shaving kit I had bought him before he was born. *You can do it*, I told him, sure that he would sense my patience, my confidence, and pass through this valley quickly.

That was at the beginning, when the planes came only once or twice a night. Now I laid him on my bed and fell down beside him, already tensed for his yell. He didn't need a boom to start him off anymore. Behind my eyelids, sparking whirligigs slowed to great turning wheels; helplessly tired, I slid away into the warm black wash, spreading out, floating. A sudden sharp concussion rattled the house, but the dream held. The darkness was abruptly seeded with eyes coldly watching, coming closer.

They're dead, these tigers. Shreds of them hang down—bloody tag of nostril, ribbon of lip. They circle, dust caked in their cankered paws, and they watch, eyes milky with infection, but they are dead and I can't move. One of them coughs, deep in his nightmare chest; any second they'll be on me with their rotting jaws, their rancid slobber. I hear the bubbling cough again, a signal as they leap—

Eric's scream drilled me awake. He sat bolt upright, rigid and trembling, small fists clenched for combat. "Tiger," he whimpered, his eyes still seeing the saber-toothed monster who patrolled his sleep. Still wrapped in the clammy remnants of my own fright, I snatched him into my arms. Furious with fatigue and helplessness, I rocked him as he sobbed, crooned him all the comforts I could remember. We were partners in it now.

It's wrong, it's wrong, I thought as we rocked together, holding onto each other. Another boom exploded, and another. Nights weren't enough; they were blowing the days out from under us now. I heard the distant snarl of a plane speeding away over the White Mountains, and I thought of Washington and the Pentagon and doing our part, and I decided that the kingdom and the power and the glory weren't worth a damn when you considered children.

After a long time my husband came to the telephone. "Listen," he said, "I can't talk now, we're going crazy here." In the background I heard phones ringing, and a jumble of voices. "Right," my husband said to someone there, "I'll be right with you."

"I'll call you back," he said to me.

"Wait," I said, "What's crazy? What's happening?" Another boom shook the house, very close.

"Listen," said my husband, "I want you to give Eric a sleeping pill tonight and I want you to take three, and I'll be home as soon as I can." Another thunderclap rattled the house. "God damn," said my husband.

"But —"

"All right, I said I was coming," I heard him

say, and the line went dead.

"No more tigers," I told Eric as I crushed the small white pill to powder. "I'm going to take away your dreams," I said, bracing myself as another explosion rumbled through the night. Molly whined and scratched at her floppy ears; squealing, her pups burrowed closer to her.

Tomorrow, I thought furiously, mixing the powder into a spoonful of applesauce, *tomorrow, I'm going somewhere—the Air Force base, the governor's house—and I am taking Molly and Eric and Estelle and Mr. DiAngelo—I* steadied myself as a thunderclap rolled through the sky; the dining-room lamp swayed gently and crashed down onto the table, scattering glass—and *I am going to make them stop this*.

"Eat," I said, thrusting the doctored spoonful at Eric, and he swallowed it down as if he understood.

Ignoring the dining-room wreckage, I moved as smoothly as I could into Eric's bedtime routine: bath—the rubber duck bobbing gently as the house shook once again—bath, pajamas, story, kiss, bed.

"No more tigers," I repeated, tucking him in. "Get it?" My hands shook as I wound his music box, plugged the Tinker Bell nightlight into the socket. As I set the Disneyland mobile spinning over his bed a few crumbs of plaster floated down. "Because if there are," I went on, raising my voice over the rumble of a new boom, "I'm going to kill them. I'm going to bash them and crash them and smash them," I said. "Understand?"

Eric nodded gravely and closed his eyes, as if all along he'd been waiting for me to say this, to stand up for him and fight.

Walls shook, windows rattled; the house was one big tambourine. Eric slept. I sat and watched the rhythmic flaring of his nostrils, the gentle rising and falling under the quilt, and the booms merged into long rolling waves of thunder. Gradually the waves receded to a distant hissing: *this is not happening*. I thought, and then I was in the dream.

Raising the window, I put my head out into the tropical night. The reek of rotting leaves steamed up from the snowdrifts; warm runnels streamed

down the cold window glass. Close by in the yard was a snarl, a brief scuffle, a chopped-off shriek. Down at the corner of Main Street the town's only stoplight flickered through jungle-parrot red, yellow green . . .

I woke to silence—how much later? Eric was quiet. Everything was quiet. The planes had stopped. Outside the bedroom door Molly scratched and whimpered to be let in. I took a deep breath. *I will make myself a cup of tea*, I thought carefully, and I got unsteadily to my feet and headed for the kitchen with Molly jumping and dancing joyously around my feet, leaping up to nudge my hand with her damp, sticky muzzle.

It was quiet in the kitchen, too, and I had gotten out the tea bags and put the kettle on before I glanced under the table at the torn, spattered box where Molly had savaged her pups.

I can't scream, I thought, *I have to be calm*—forcing my hand out to turn off the stove—I *can't start a fire or do anything else that will drive us outside*. Molly peered into the box and a switch seemed to click inside her pretty golden head; she turned to me and growled—and charged.

I felt her body crash against the bedroom door as I slammed it; much later her toenails clicked away down the hall.

I sat in the rocking chair, watching Eric sleep, waiting for morning, although I had no idea what I would do then. I wanted to call my husband, but I was afraid to go out to the kitchen; every so often Molly came scratching at the door, whining. But somehow morning came. The sky was gray and she had been quiet for a while; when the phone rang I decided to risk it.

There was no sign of her. I picked up the phone and my husband was talking. "Listen," he said. "Please. Do exactly what I say. Don't pack. Take Eric and get in the car. Stay off the highway, take the back roads." In the background I could hear voices approach, then fade away.

"Please," I said, "tell me what's happening, it's a nightmare here—"

The harsh, bitter sound of his laugh was more frightening than anything so far. "Nightmare. You've got it, all right. The planes—they're not testing planes. They're testing a weapon. Why drop bombs when people are set to self-destruct? And I've been helping them, how could I be so stupid—" The voices returned, growing louder. "I've got to go, they're coming in here. Take Eric and do what I say. Do it now."

I filled a baby bottle with milk and gave it to Eric, who was delighted, since he was usually required to drink from a cup. I carried him, still wrapped in his blanket, past Molly, who was growling

in the living room, playfully pretending to pounce on something.

After a horrible moment the car started and I drove away from town, moving slowly; the road was freshly plowed with high snowbanks on either side, and I followed it out past the dam and the frozen reservoir. *If I can get to Nashua*, I thought, *the state police, the television station . . .* We passed through a tunnel of branches; this was water company land and the old pines grew close to the narrow road. Low branches scraped the car top; our tires squeaked steadily on the hard snow, and as Eric placidly sucked his bottle I began to think we might get out, we might make it.

Just ahead was the power station, a low cement-block building tucked under the pines, and beyond it the bridge. After that came the old town road; no one used it much since they built the highway and I prayed that it was plowed. Shifting into fourth gear, I stepped hard on the gas, and the dark green Army truck pulled out from alongside the power station and blocked the road.

The men were quiet and polite, as if they escorted mothers and babies at gunpoint every day, and when I asked them what they thought they were doing, exactly, they said that they were Following Instructions, they were Preventing Panic, they were Maintaining Order.

I told Eric we were going to ride home in a big truck; as we pulled away he laughed and waved his bottle at the men standing around our car. I sat between two soldiers; the one who was driving stiffened slightly when Eric reached for the bright stripes on his shoulder, but he didn't take his eyes off the road.

"We can't go in there," I said when we pulled up in front of the house. "The dog, she's—"

The soldiers looked at each other, and one of them took my key and went into the house. There was a shot, and he came out with something wrapped in his jacket, and they went away. Later they brought my husband home, and later still on the evening news we heard that Hancock was a disaster area.

My husband sat on the living-room floor drinking a bottle of beer and watching the announcer's open honest face and listening to his honest voice. A freak mass hysteria had struck overnight but seemed to be ending; the Army and the National Guard were protecting us, keeping order until the situation returned to normal.

Neither of us said anything. It was over. It was quiet. It had been done. Barbed wire was stretched across the highways, and our telephone was dead, but no one was to worry. The situation was returning to normal, and the government told the truth.

And so, of course, did the television news. **12**

Outland



ROBERT MARTIN INTERVIEWS DIRECTOR PETER HYAMS, THE MAN BEHIND WHAT HAS BEEN CALLED A "HIGH NOON SET IN SPACE."

In the midst of the volcano-pocked wasteland that is the surface of Io, Jupiter's innermost moon, there is one small outpost of humanity. This is the complex known as Consolidated Amalgamate 27, a mining colony covering just over three square miles—the only relief to the subplanet's endless landscape of sulfuric ash.

The design of the colony, especially that of the workers' quarters, tells much about the quality and value of human life on Io. An exterior view of the massive steel structure suggests the facade of a top-security prison, though it is unlikely that any of its residents would care to escape into the poisonous climate that surrounds them. The interior of the workers' quarters is dominated by row upon row of sleeping cubicles, and these resemble nothing more than rabbit hutches or the cages of a dog pound. Within each cubicle is a video computer center, there for one express purpose—to distract each resident from the fact that he is sharing a single vast room with 1,249 other workers. Sometimes the distractions don't work; the colony on Io is marked by a very high incidence of violence, insanity, and suicide.

This is the setting created by Peter Hyams for *Outland*, this year's most elaborate entry in the science fiction megabudget sweepstakes. Expectations for the widespread success of *Outland* are extremely high, largely because it is the first science fiction film from The Ladd Company, the production outfit of Alan Ladd, Jr. The company was formed last year after Ladd's departure from 20th Century-Fox, where the prototypically successful science fiction films *Star Wars* and *Alien* were developed under his supervision.

The third time around, Ladd is betting on young writer-director Peter Hyams. Hyams's talents seem particularly suited to the realm of science fiction, where story, design, and special effects are interdependent elements of a total vision. Hyams has been a skilled painter since early childhood, an avocation which led to an interest in photography. He began his professional career as a documentary filmmaker and spent eight years as a film journalist for CBS News, during which time he extensively covered the American manned space program. That experience provided the inspiration for his most successful



The prisonlike living quarters of Con-Am 27, a mining colony on Io, Jupiter's innermost moon.

feature film, the sf-flavored action picture *Capricorn 1*, though the other five feature films to his credit have all been as solidly earthbound as *Busting* and *Hanover Street*.

Hyams finds working in a pure science fiction context both a joy and a torment. "I love the idea that you're working from scratch," he says. "Rather than reproducing something, you're making something entirely new. It's like working on a blank canvas; you're totally unrestricted in what you choose to put on it. What I *don't* like about it is exactly that sort of freedom, and knowing that its limitations are your own limitations. Whatever is wrong with this movie is whatever there is between me and genius. The other thing that's maddening is that you're dealing with state-of-the-art techniques in every area, even in makeup and wardrobe. As a result, making a film can be frustratingly slow and complicated and very uncomfortable."

Outland, Hyams tells us, was conceived one evening, "when I started thinking seriously about a lot of what I'd been seeing in films, especially those films dealing with the future. I thought about what I liked about them, what I didn't like. Everyone seemed to be dealing with the future as some wonderful fantasy, some terrific kind of adventure. I decided to treat the future not as some lucite-dome fantasy, but as what I think it would be—a frontier.

"As is true of most frontiers, its people would not be there out of altruism or from any desire to widen the horizons of humanity. More likely, they'd have gone out there for the monetary gain, because of what they can bring back. So if something is built out there, the odds are that it will be a mine.

"I figured that such a place would be rife with the same problems that we suffer from here and now. And if you consider it well, you're likely to come to the conclusion that the people who'd work in such a mining colony would be no different from the people who built the Alaska pipeline or who work the offshore oil rigs, and probably no different from those who built the Suez Canal or populated Dodge City.

"I also decided that I wanted to make a movie of the future that was about people. Not about hardware, not about an aerial dogfight between two pieces of plastic, not about an animal that eats a city. We've explored the big special effects; these films will now have to deal more with people, plots, and character."

For all his stress on character and story, the director remains very reserved in discussing these aspects of the film prior to its premiere. After our talk with Hyams, a member of the technical crew described the story to us as "*High Noon* set in outer space," combined with futuristic "whodunit." Sean Connery stars in the role of Federal



Within, 1,250 mine workers live in a dormitory that is little more than a series of stacked cages.



Newly assigned District Marshal William T. O'Neill (Sean Connery) finds his wife (Kika Markham) dissatisfied with their rootless life and with the prospect of raising their adolescent son so far from Earth.



Miners suit up for their dangerous shift in the titanium mine.



Deep beneath Io's surface, a worker cracks, experiencing a psychotic episode that leads to his own ghastly demise.

District Marshal William T. O'Neil, a recent arrival at Con-Am 27, stationed there as chief of security for a one-year term. While adjusting himself to the harsh life of the colony, he finds his attention drawn to a series of curious deaths—two apparent suicides and the case of a man killed when he suddenly attacked another miner.

"This is a guy who is not the best at what he does," says Hyams of the Connery character, "but not the worst either. There's a whole system of places like the colony, and 27 is not where they send the all-stars. In the military, the equivalent would be the commander of some forgotten swamp. But he's a terribly stubborn man who feels he must draw a line at some point and say, 'That's it . . . no more.' To an extent, the film is about what happens when a man of determination draws such a line."

Hyams considers Connery the most logical choice for such a role, thanks to his gift for portraying both strength and vulnerability. "He's a wonderful film actor," Hyams adds, "in that his emotions seem to live just beneath the surface of his skin. When you watch him on screen, you can really sense what he's feeling."

It is Hyams's habit to draw before writing and to paint each scene from his scripts before shooting, so that, more than most directors, he makes a considerable contribution to the overall design of each of his films. For *Outland*, Hyams's conceptions were carried through by production designer Philip Harrison.

"Philip is a very practical designer, which is what I love about him. He recently spent a great deal of time restoring an old steamboat, and there's a real boiler-room mentality that I wanted in this movie. I wanted you to see all the ribbing, all the piping, all the switches, because there wouldn't be any reason to cover them up."

"For *Capricorn I*, we built an extraordinary replica of the lunar landing module, done to NASA specifications. When our NASA advisor came onto the set, I asked him why it had such a funny shape, and he explained it very simply. Aerodynamics are unimportant in the vacuum of space, so you just bolt together all the pieces that you need and stretch a skin around them. That's your shape."

"The design concept for this picture follows the same idea—that design goes no further than function. And I



In the colony's leisure club, erotic dancers perform under laser light while hostesses deal more directly with the men's desires for entertainment.



When another miner succumbs to insanity, a leisure club hostess is brutally murdered.



O'Neil consults with Dr. Marian Lazarus (Frances Sternhagen) on the outbreak of insane violence. The doctor dismisses such incidents as routine, but O'Neil's suspicions are not totally put to rest.



Con-Am 27's managing director, Mark Sheppard (Peter Boyle), responds with hostility when confronted with O'Neill's alarming discoveries.

wanted the function to be visible in the design, so that you could almost see the thought processes involved in building the entire colony. For instance, the workers' quarters: all right, here's where these people are going to live and we have 'x' amount of space. How are we going to cram the most people possible in here?

"It's a filthy place, an oppressively filthy place, and very claustrophobic. I designed the ceilings very low, about six and a half feet, and I went through the sets with a bucket of grease and sawdust. All the aisles are two feet four inches wide instead of three feet wide. Everything is like that, as it would be if a corporation learned they could build comfortable workers' quarters for a million dollars or could build less comfortable quarters for six hundred thousand dollars. I suspect they'd take the latter; there's nothing to lead me to believe they would do otherwise."

Unlike many other directors of such major-budget science fiction films, Hyams took upon his own shoulders the task of directing the film's effects sequences, including those utilizing a new system of front projection called Introvision. The system is put to maximum use in *Outland's* climactic scenes, an extended chase set on the outer surface of the mining colony.

Word of mouth on the film has followed the same pattern as that of the most successful releases of recent years—which, Hyams says, scares him out of his wits. But Hyams does not seem the sort to let a personality cult grow around him, as has happened to some of the other young directors working in the science fiction field.

"If *Outland* turns out to be that kind of success," he says, "that doesn't mean that I know a great deal. It means that, through a very lucky set of circumstances, I have come up with an idea that people liked and that I made the movie at the right studio. I don't want people leaving the theater saying, 'Boy, that Hyams can direct a movie with style.' I don't even want to be noticed, because the director's never as important as the story. I want Sean to be noticed because he's the central character. And I want the story to be noticed. I would love for people to be really excited by the film, to be scared out of their wits at some points, and to come away feeling they've gotten their money's worth."

"That's what any good movie is about." 17



After O'Neill and his deputy (James B. Sikking) interrogate a suspect held captive in a gravity-free prison cell, the marshal learns that he is marked for death.



Hired to eliminate the troublesome lawman, a pair of assassins arrive on the company shuttle.



O'Neill sets out alone for a final confrontation with the gunmen.



THE FIREMAN'S DAUGHTER

BY PHYLLIS EISENSTEIN

THE POWER WAS THERE FOR THE ASKING. YOU JUST HAD TO WANT IT ENOUGH.

I suppose Leila and I first became friends because we were both social outcasts. We weren't part of the popular set, the dating crowd, the girls in their mohair sweaters and the jocks in their school jackets. I remember feeling proud that I wasn't a member of the in-crowd, that boring, stupid, petty mob of gum-chewers. And I remember crying bitterly because all the time I was looking down on them, they were looking down on me.

But Leila never seemed to be bothered by the whispers and disdainful glances. Or maybe she hid her anguish better than I did. She was, after all, used to hiding things.

Partly, the ostracism was our own fault. We were shy, bookish girls, prone to daydreaming. We

preferred museums to parties, and *National Geographic* to *Teen Beat*.

Partly, the ostracism was the fault of the school system. In the last year of grammar school, all students in the city had to take a battery of tests to determine how well-prepared they were for high school. Leila and I scored at the very top of the scale in all subjects. For our kind, there was a special experimental program, a blocked schedule of honors classes. For four years twenty-eight of us, the cream of the cream from half a dozen grammar schools, would move from class to class as a group. Our only contact with lesser students would be in gym and lunch. In spite of this intellectual prison, my honors classmates managed to circulate among the mohair

sweaters and school jackets. If anyone else was a misfit, I didn't know about it.

Except for Leila.

She sat beside me in all of our classes, trapped there by alphabetical order. We were drawn together as much by spatial relationship as by emotional compatibility. And I became accustomed to the distant look in her eyes, that unfocused, unblinking stare that made other students edge away from her and caused teachers to rap sharply on their desks with a ruler and say, "Leila, are you *listening* to me?" And because I knew she hadn't been listening, I would mutter the question to her, to give her a second chance.

From the start we did things together. In biology, she dissected the creatures that made my skin crawl while I did the clean, cold-blooded fish. We checked each other's homework and studied for exams by throwing practice questions back and forth. We even returned books to the library on the same day, books we had both read during the loan period. My mother automatically set a dinner place for Leila if she stayed late at my house; or if we were at hers, Leila and I would cook dinner for ourselves and her dad.

Her father was a fireman. Her mother had died when she was a child, and she and her father had looked after one another since then. That had made her independent, but she was lonely, too, often going home to an empty house because he was working a late shift. And then, of course, there was the problem of his job; it sounded exciting to me until she talked about the burns and the hospital stays and the worry she went through, always the worry. He loved fire fighting, and Leila hated it. But they had been through all that long before I met them, and he had won.

She loved him very much.

He was always kind to me, gently joking, as he did with Leila. I never saw the two of them in conflict. Perhaps they saved that for when I wasn't around. Sweet, quiet Leila—my parents considered her a good influence on me. I couldn't imagine her shouting at her father. But she had seen me shouting at mine. And she had eased out of the house, discreet as a breath of wind and never spoken of the incident again.

I loved Leila. Oh, we had our arguments. Or rather, I had them; Leila wouldn't participate. She would just stand there and stare at me, and if I got too angry she would walk away. But she always came back.

We didn't spend all of our free time together. Some days Leila would hurry away after school, saying she had errands to run, and if I suggested tagging along, she would brush that aside, insisting she would be more efficient alone. Occasionally, after

planning to stay for dinner at my house, she would change her mind and leave early, saying she wasn't feeling well. And once, when we were ice skating on a Saturday afternoon, she left after twisting her ankle in a fall that didn't look accidental to me—and she didn't let me help her home. "I don't want to spoil your fun," she said. Even though she knew that skating wouldn't be much fun for me after she was gone.

I might have thought these incidents my fault, that I had somehow offended her or that she was temporarily tired of me, except that they weren't confined to our potential free time together. Sometimes Leila left school in the middle of the day; she would be in one class and not the next, and if the teacher asked me, her best friend, what had happened to her, I didn't know. I usually covered for her, though, claiming she hadn't been feeling well earlier in the day. And that generally agreed with the excuse she had the next morning, written in her father's sprawling script. Only I knew how well she could imitate that writing.

So I wasn't hurt when she shut me out of her activities, not beyond the first few times. But I was worried. What illness did she have that I didn't know about? Not just the common cold or flu or German measles. She had something that struck suddenly and disappeared as fast. And the only symptom I could see was an occasional paleness in her cheeks. She wouldn't admit to anything specific. "I just don't feel well," she would say, and then that silence would descend that told me I wasn't going to get any further with her.

I was unhappy that there was a secret between us. I had no secrets from her—I confessed everything, every hope, every dream, every love, every hate. There was nothing about me that she didn't know. It was a comfort to me, not to have to overexplain when I was unhappy. A few key words, and all was clear to her; she would murmur sympathetically. That, I thought, was the way best friends should be.

But Leila had secrets. And she pretended to me, her best friend, that she didn't.

We were in our third year of high school when I finally decided to follow her on one of her "errands." Television had taught me something about tailing people; I stayed half a block behind her and across the street. When she boarded a bus, though, I couldn't run fast enough to catch up. And if I had, of course, she would have seen me.

After that, I kept a careful eye on her at school, and the next time she left between classes, I followed. If she was, in fact, suddenly sick, she'd be going home to lie down. But she never went near her house; she went to the bus again. A doctor's appointment, I thought, and then I realized that if all

THE FIREMAN'S DAUGHTER

her half-day absences were doctor's appointments, the notes in her father's handwriting would say so. One thing was sure—she wasn't too sick to travel.

I had some trouble with my parents over my own absence from school that day, but I managed to convince them that I was coming down with a head cold and couldn't bear another moment of the hubbub between classes. I spent the following day in bed to make that excuse stick.

The next time Leila left school, I tailed her again; and I closed the gap between us just as the bus arrived. After paying my fare, I sat down beside her.

"What are you doing here?" she said. She looked at her watch, as if she weren't sure it was too early for school to be out.

"I have to go someplace," I said.

"Where?"

"Someplace," I repeated, and then I closed my mouth firmly. I intended to treat her the way she treated me—no cross-examinations allowed. We rode on in silence.

At the El station, she got up. "See you tomorrow."

I got up, too, and we left the bus one after the other.

"You're following me," she said.

I shook my head. We handed our transfers in at the fare booth and climbed the stairs to the platform.

A train came and she stepped through the doors, with me right behind her. Then she turned around and stepped back to the platform, and of course I had to do the same.

"You *are* following me," she said. "Your parents will kill you for ditching school."

I shrugged.

"Go on home," said Leila. "Stop being silly."

"It's a free country," I told her. "I'll be silly if I like."

"I don't want you following me."

"Then tell me where you're going."

"I'm not going anywhere."

"Oh, I see," I said. "You just like standing on the El platform."

Another train was coming in. Leila glanced at it, frowning. "Listen, I don't want to be responsible for you getting into trouble with your folks."

"I won't blame you. I'll say I went to a movie."

"You really think they'll believe that?"

"I don't care."

The train pulled into the station and the doors opened. Leila stepped in, and I followed. She turned to me as people jostled by us to get seats. "Will you go home?" she said, her voice pitched just a little higher than normal. It was as close as I had ever heard her come to shouting.

I shook my head, and the train doors closed,

and we were heading south together.

We rode for a long time, it seemed like hours, but that was only because of the tight silence between us. We got off the El before it dipped underground. At street level, Leila began walking briskly westward, and I had to stretch my legs to keep up.

Presently we left the shopping district that surrounded the El station for a neighborhood of narrow streets and closely crowded apartment buildings. Leila stepped up her stride till she was half-running, and I trailed a few paces behind. We cut through an alley and then through a gangway. We started dogs barking in three backyards.

Suddenly I realized that a sound had been growing steadily in my awareness, a high-pitched wail still many blocks away, but coming closer, ever closer.

Fire engines.

I smelled the smoke before I saw it, but I saw it soon enough—a thin plume trailing from an upper story window. As I watched, it turned to black billows, and people began to run out of the place carrying pieces of furniture, clothing, babies. One woman had an iron in her hand, its cord fluttering after her like a tail.

We stopped in a doorway across the street from the burning building, and we watched while the fire trucks pulled up and the men jumped out to deploy their hoses. Leila's father was among them. I recognized him, but he didn't see us—he was too busy, and we were swamped by refugees, other on-lookers, and the police who soon arrived to keep people back. The whole neighborhood must have joined us within ten minutes, watching the flames break through the roof and threaten adjoining buildings. I had never seen a fire first-hand before, only on tv, and I was amazed and a little frightened by how vast and unpredictable it seemed. Behind the windows, I could see sparks shooting up as beams gave way and whole floors fell; a fresh gout of flame would ripple up after that, to be followed—as water poured on the outburst—by smoke so thick that it looked solid. The scent of that smoke, when the wind gusts it toward me, made my nose and eyes water. After about an hour, though, the firemen had the whole thing under control, and people who didn't live in the building began drifting away.

Leila had watched it all, staring at the smoke and flames and running men with listant, unfocused eyes. Only when the fire fighters began to coil up their hoses did she turn away at last and start walking back the way we had come.

"Aren't you going to say hello to your dad?" I asked.

She shook her head.

Back on the El, headed north, I said, "Are you going home now?"

She nodded, slumping in her seat, one shoulder against the window. She closed her eyes.

I leaned toward her. "Are you all right?"

She covered her face with both hands. "Yeah."

The bus took us back to our neighborhood, and then she trudged the three blocks to her house. I walked up the steps behind her.

"I'm tired," she said, fumbling with her key.

"I'll make you a cup of cocoa."

She looked at me over her shoulder. "I don't feel like company."

"Okay," I said. "I'll go home after you tell me why you left school early today."

"No reason." She touched the doorknob but didn't push the door open. "I'm really tired."

"Leila, if you don't tell me, I'll follow you the next time, and the time after that. I'll stick to you like a shadow."

"No. Don't."

"I mean it."

She frowned down at the doorknob, at her hand poised on it. "I just went to see my dad. That's all."

"But you didn't say a word to him. You didn't even wave."

She lifted one shoulder. "He was busy."

I touched her arm tentatively. "Is something wrong? Is there anything I can do? You can tell me, Leila."

"There's nothing wrong."

"Yes, there is."

"No. Really."

Very softly I said, "Won't you let me help you?"

Her lips curved, but it wasn't really a smile.

"You don't want to help. You just want to know."

"I'll help if I can."

"There's nothing you can do."

"Then there *is* something wrong."

She stared at me. Those eyes so often distant and hazy focused sharply on me. I stared back, defiant. I had come this far, and I was going to stand my ground.

"You're such a pest," said Leila.

"Come on, let's go inside and have some cocoa."

She pushed the door open and let me follow her in.

At the kitchen table we were silent over our cups until I finally said, "This wasn't the first time I've followed you, at least as far as the bus."

She looked at me thoughtfully. "I never noticed."

"I've been worried about you."

"Worried?" She tilted her head to one side.

"Why should you be worried?"

"I was worried about what you might be doing, what might be happening to you."



"What do you think was happening to me."

I set my cup down and leaned back in my chair. "Well, at first I thought you had some horrible disease that you were seeing a downtown specialist for. But then I thought surely somewhere along the line you'd tell your best friend about *that*. So I figured it was a different kind of secret, maybe that you were hooked on drugs and traveling someplace to make your buy. But you never offered *me* any, and I'd think that a friend would, so I ruled that out, too. Which left only one alternative that I could imagine—your pimp was sending you out on calls."

She sat up straight. "My *pimp*?"

"It's something you might want to keep a secret."

"How can you think a thing like that?"

I shrugged. "Can the truth be any worse?"

Leila scowled. "I can't believe it. My best friend thinks I'm a prostitute."

I clasped my hands behind my neck and slouched down in my chair. "Steer me right, then, Leila. I don't *want* to think that."

She gave me a very long look. "I've never told anybody about it," she said. "Not anybody."

I waited for her to go on, and when she didn't, I said, "Not even . . . your father?"

"No. Especially not him." Her lips tightened a moment, then she said, "And you must promise not to tell him either."

"I promise."

She pointed a finger at me. "I mean *really* promise. Because if you ever tell him, or anyone, I

THE FIREMAN'S DAUGHTER

promise *you* that I'll never speak to you again. I'll be your enemy forever. I mean it."

And the look on her face was so stern that I knew she did mean it. Firmly I said, "I promise."

She went to the pantry and found a box of matches. She struck one and held it upright between two fingers. The flame burned bright and yellow. "Watch," she said.

As I watched, the flame went out, leaving a thin wisp of smoke behind.

"Yeah?" I said.

"You don't get it, do you?"

"Get what?"

"Okay, watch again." This time she turned on one of the burners of the stove. The gas fire was like a ring of translucent blue beads. Leila stared at it. "Now," she said.

The flames sank away to nothing. I could hear the gas hissing softly where they had been, and after a few seconds I could smell it. Leila twisted the knob to the "off" position.

"Clogged vents," I said. "You can clean them out with a needle."

"Don't be stupid." She turned the knob again, and the flames sprang to life. "There's nothing clogging anything. I'll give you one more chance, this time with your brain turned on." She crumpled some paper towels and laid them on a dinner plate on the table. Then she struck a match and dropped it on the paper, which caught at one edge and burned swiftly. When the flames were dancing to a height of several inches, Leila said, "Look!"

The flames vanished. They died as if their source of oxygen had suddenly been removed. Unburned paper edged with ash and brown scorch was left behind.

"Do you know what you saw?" Leila asked.

I poked at the paper with one finger. "How did you do that?"

"Yes," she said. "I did it. I did."

I nodded slowly. "It's a neat trick. Is the paper specially treated?"

"It's just ordinary paper."

"Then how did you make it go out?"

"I *thought* it out." My puzzlement must have shown on my face, because she waved her hands impatiently. "I can make things stop burning by thinking at them."

"Thinking at them?" I echoed.

"Well, it's not just thinking. It's a kind of deep concentration. It's like a force from inside me, pouring out onto the flames."

"You mean ... you're a human fire extinguisher?"

She nodded.

Suddenly things clicked in my brain. "Is that what you were doing at the fire today?"

**"I have to go—
night, day, it
doesn't matter,
when the
feeling's strong
enough. Because
I know if I don't,
something terrible
will happen."**

"Yeah. Helping, anyway. Little stuff like matches or paper is easy, but a big fire really pushes me to my limits. I'm not nearly strong enough to damp it all."

"But ... how did you know where the fire would be? How did you know that today, this afternoon ...?"

"I always know when my dad's going to be at a fire. I always know where and when and how big it's going to be."

"How?"

She shrugged. "I can feel it, hours before it starts. The really big ones make my stomach hurt. I try to ignore them if they're small. But sometimes I can't ignore them. Sometimes I can even see the flames, like gauze curtains all around me. Those are the worst. I try to think at them from wherever I am, but it doesn't work very well from a distance. I really have to be close by to put the flames out."

"But there are so many fires in the city, every day ... You could spend your whole life on them."

She shook her head. "I only know about the ones my dad fights. If he isn't involved, it doesn't affect me."

"Does he know that you have this ... this power?"

"No." She sat down at the table and stared at the half-burned paper towels. "No one knows, except you."

"Well ... why not tell him?"

She looked up at me. "Have you ever heard of anyone who could do this?"

"No."

"Can you do it?"

"Of course not."

"Come on," she said. "Give it a try." She struck a match. The flame burned clear and bright. "Put it out. Go on."

I laughed hesitantly. "You know I can't."

"Go on. Try."

"It'll burn your fingers in a minute."

"Try."

I frowned at the flame. "All right." I held my breath and glared at the wavering speck of light, thinking with every crumb of energy I could generate, willing it to go out. The match burned down almost to Leila's fingers, and then it snuffed out abruptly. "You did that," I said.

She nodded. "I never get burned." She dropped the dead match onto the paper towels. "What if you could?" she said. "What if you woke up one morning and you could put out fires by thinking at them?"

"I'd think it was terrific."

"Yeah, that was my first reaction. But after a while I started thinking about people who could do terrific, unusual things. Like swallow swords, or run needles through their skin without feeling any pain. Circus freaks. That's what I am, a freak."

"But it's such a marvelous talent, Leila. You could be on the front page. You could make the network news."

Her hands clasped each other tightly. "People would want me to do it over and over again, all the time. Like a carnival act. And I'd turn into public property. How could I refuse to keep putting out fires? Maybe they'd ride me from fire to fire in a special truck, or a helicopter. I'd be on twenty-four-hour call, like a doctor. The human fire extinguisher. I could say goodbye to my private life."

"But you already go to fires."

"Don't you understand?" Her fist struck the table hard. "It's not because I like putting out fires. It's for my dad! I go to the fires *he's* fighting, and I help him. I can feel where he goes inside the burning buildings, as if I were right beside him. He hasn't been burned in four years: because I keep the flames away from him. What do I care if it means missing a little school?" Both of her hands were fists now. "I hide behind trees, behind other people. I skulk in doorways. I don't dare let him see me. He'd be furious."

"But you can't watch over him all the time. I mean, sometimes he's on duty at night, isn't he? There are big fires at night."

"I go to them, too."

"By yourself?"

She nodded.

"On the El, a one, at night?"

"I carry a knife. I'm not afraid."

"Leila! He'd be furious all right. A lot more than from your cutting a few classes."

"I have to go—night, day, it doesn't matter, when the feeling's strong enough. I have to. Because I



know if I don't, something terrible will happen."

Firmly I said, "You shouldn't be running all over the city by yourself, especially after dark. Even if you do carry a knife."

"I've been doing it for four years and never had any trouble."

"Maybe you've just been lucky."

"I like to think that I look mean enough to scare the muggers away."

"Luck," I said.

"I'm not afraid."

I leaned toward her. "Well, if you're not, neither am I. I'm going along with you next time you go to a fire. And the time after that and the time after that. I'm bigger than you, and I'll carry *two* knives."

She looked at me with raised eyebrows. "And what will your parents say to that?"

"I won't tell them."

"Oh, sure. You'll sneak out of the house in the middle of the night, and they won't know a thing about it."

I poked her shoulder. "You said you know about fires hours before they start. So you probably know long before sunset. Right?"

Slowly she said, "The really big ones."

"The ones you go to."

She nodded.

"So I'll sleep over at your place on those nights, and we'll go out together. My folks'll never know a thing about it."

"What if they call and no one answers the phone?"

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"We can always say it was out of order, or the TV was too loud, or we were in the backyard."

She stared at me speculatively. "Do you really mean it?"

"Absolutely."

"You'll get tired of it. Especially in the winter, standing out in the cold and snow."

I shrugged. "We'll see."

"I don't want you to cut class for me."

"Let me make that decision."

"I don't know . . ."

The next time Leila vanished from school, she did it without warning, as usual. She had told me she was going to the bathroom, and when the next class started she wasn't there. After school I phoned her house every hour until she answered. I couldn't say much because my parents were home, but I managed to convey my anger and disappointment. Leila was mildly apologetic. From that day on, I stuck to her from class to class, from the lunch line to the bathroom. As long as we were in school, I didn't let her out of my sight. And three or four times a day I would ask her how she felt.

She gave in. She had to. She learned to forge my mother's writing, and we went to fires together.

Soon became familiar with the district served by her father's firehouse; in the span of a few months I covered most of it on foot. I lost track of the number of blazes we viewed, and Leila assured me that there were many smaller ones which she ignored. I grew to recognize all the members of her father's engine company, all the equipment their truck carried, and the procedures they employed. And by watching Leila, I learned to be unobtrusive. Somehow she always knew just where to stand to go unnoticed—neither her father nor anyone on his truck ever paid any attention to her. Of course, the crowds drawn by the really big fires, the only ones we went to, helped camouflage us.

At night, sometimes, I was nervous traveling on the El, but Leila never seemed to be; she was preoccupied, her eyes focused on the far distance, on the flames she could see in the future. We always sat close to the motorman, and I kept a hand on one of the kitchen knives in my pocket. I tried to look mean, unapproachable. Possibly I succeeded; at least no one ever bothered us.

After a fire, we were able to beat Leila's father home; he took public transportation, too, but because he went back to the firehouse first, even if his shift was technically over, he always arrived home to find us sleeping peacefully. Or seeming to sleep. Sometimes I lay there in the dark in Leila's room, listening to him rummage around in the kitchen and at the same time listening to Leila's even breathing. Yes, *she* was asleep. She'd done her job for the night and earned a good rest.

I watched her more often than I watched the

fires themselves. I could see her concentration, the tension in the muscles of her neck, the fists tight against her thighs. Her eyes followed her father every moment, followed him with hose and axe, with the bulky breathing gear that made him look like a creature from another planet, followed him into the flames and beyond. And if I watched him, I could see the evidence of her labor, for there was always a clear space around him, a halo of flameless air, a tunnel through which he could pass. And when he vanished from my sight, I knew that Leila was still with him, seeing him, not with her eyes but with the inner vision that had drawn her to the blaze. When she turned away from a fire, I knew it was finished.

At Leila's sometimes, I would play with matches. At least she called it playing. She'd sit silent as I struck match after match and stared at the wavering flames, willing them to snuff out. Sometimes they singed my fingers before I dropped them in an ashtray, still burning.

"How do you do it?" I'd ask her. And she would shrug and say, "I just want it to happen, and it does. Maybe you don't *want* hard enough."

I used up a lot of matches.

Winter descended, and as Leila had warned, I didn't much like standing out in the cold and snow. But I wasn't going to abandon her just because of a little discomfort. I bought myself thick wool socks and insulated boots, extra mittens, a ski mask.

I wore it all on that night in February.

Leila warned me right after school. Her stomach had just started to hurt, and she guessed that we had about two hours to kill before starting south. She suggested I grab a sandwich when I stopped home for my pajamas; our dinner would be pretty late, by the time we got back from the fire. I offered to make her a sandwich, too, but she didn't feel like eating. As usual, I had no trouble with my parents over staying at her place.

The sky was dark by the time we were on the El, but the city lights made the fresh snow on every rooftop sparkle like cut glass. We didn't talk much as we rode, just soaked in the warmth inside the train and prepared ourselves for the icy walk that lay ahead. Five blocks from the El I still couldn't smell any smoke, even when Leila stopped and pointed across the street to a courtyard building; but as we watched, people began shouting and bursting from the doorways, and a moment later we could hear the sirens.

In winter, only a few people actually came outside to watch the excitement; most viewed it from their windows. Leila and I found a place out of the wind—a gangway a couple of steps down from the sidewalk. Bundled securely against the cold, I had to feel sorry for the fire fighters, their exposed faces, their fingers

that, in spite of thick gloves, must be numbed from handling hoses full of icy water. Even the fire itself was no compensation to them, just a blast of overheated air, reeking with smoke, searing the eyes and lungs, blistering their faces while their backs froze. I had heard enough stories from Leila's father; winter was the worst time to fight fires.

The men stretched their hoses, hefted their axes. I saw Leila's father enter the building wearing an oxygen mask, the flames pulling aside for him. I wondered then, not for the first time, if he ever noticed how fire often shielded away from him. Maybe not, I thought. Maybe he just assumed he was good at picking his routes. Or lucky.

I paced back and forth in the gangway, partly to keep warm, partly from restlessness. I paced, but Leila stood as still as if she'd been made of ice. What did it feel like, I wondered, to follow her father's motions inside the building? To know every step, every turn, as if she were there beside him? And did he ever feel her presence? Did he ever look back over his shoulder, feeling watched?

Leila began to moan softly, and she raised her mittened hands to her cheeks. She was wearing a ski mask, too, and all I could see of her face was the eyes, bright and unblinking and very wide. Her body began to shake as she moaned. I thought she was shivering.

I touched her arm. "Maybe we'd better find a warm hallway."

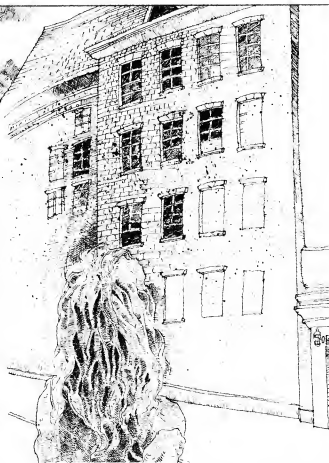
As if in response to my suggestion, she started up the steps, and I followed. But at the sidewalk, she broke into a run that carried her across the street, through the throng of scurrying fire fighters, and into the door where her father had gone. She was too quick for anyone to stop her, though a cop yelled, "Hey!" as she dashed by him. She was already inside by the time the shouting firemen started after her.

I shrank back into the gangway, fighting the impulse to scream her name. They would get her, I told myself; my hysteria wouldn't help anything. They would get her.

It seemed a long time later that the ambulance arrived. By then it didn't matter anymore. The fire had been struck out, and Leila and her father had been found. And so had I. I came out of my hiding place when the bodies were brought out.

They had been discovered together, in the basement. A floor had collapsed under him, and he had fallen through three others till concrete finally stopped him. She had died of smoke inhalation. Neither had been touched by the flames.

The police took me home. They decided to believe my story—that Leila and I had stopped at the fire on our way home from shopping because she recognized her father's engine company. They decided that I probably wasn't an arsonist. I had a harder time with my parents, who wanted to know why I was shopping in



that neighborhood at that hour when I was supposed to be safe and warm at Leila's house. I told them it had been her idea—no more than that—which made them loudly change their minds about sweet, quiet Leila and her influence on me. But I had sworn to keep her secret, and their bad opinion couldn't hurt her now. Eventually I locked myself in my room to rest my ears. After a while, I was crying so hard that I could scarcely hear their voices anymore.

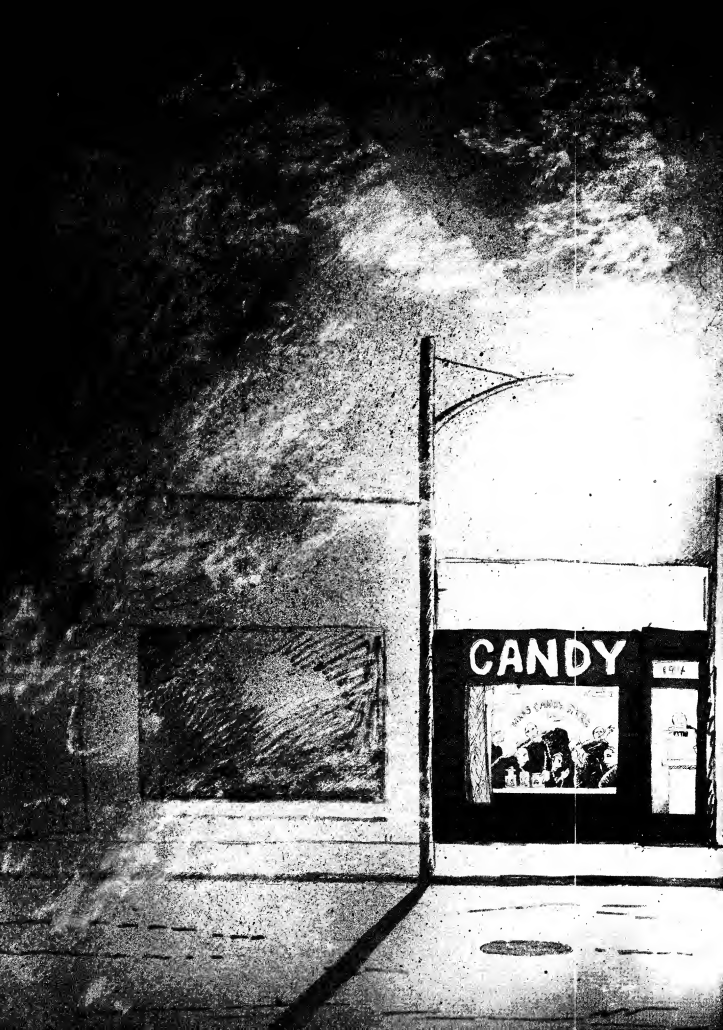
I went to the funeral over my parent's protests. Don't be morbid, they said; she wasn't worth it, she was wild, she would have gotten you into trouble, that girl. But I didn't listen.

I sat near the back of the church, far behind the fireman and their families. It wasn't my church, but I felt comfortable there because it had been Leila's. The priest was at the altar, a tall candlestick bearing a single candle on each side of him, and I couldn't help thinking how incongruous, how jarring, how insulting those naked flames were at a fireman's funeral mass. The more I stared at them, the more they offended me, and I wished they would go out. I wished it very hard. I could almost feel the will flowing from me, the will to snuff them out.

Simultaneously, they winked out—not as if blown by some vagrant breeze, but as if the oxygen that fed them had been suddenly removed.

An assistant to the priest relit the candles, but I snuffed them again.

You have to want, Leila had said. And there in the church, as the tears rolled down my cheeks, all I really wanted was Leila herself. But I knew that I would have to be content with this. **12**



SOME MEN FACE THE END
WITH A STRUGGLE,
SOME WITH A CRY,
AND SOME MEN PASS THAT FINAL NIGHT . . .

Waiting for the Papers

by Alan Ryan

These old men in the candy store always have a two-day growth of beard. I don't know how they do it. Never clean-shaven and never bearded, they just have this white stubbly bristle that always seems to be the same length. I guess they must shave sometimes, but if they do, I've never seen them just after it. Never. Maybe it only grows to a certain length when they get up in years. Hah. Something for a silent world to wonder about.

I first met them about six months ago, early in the spring. They had always been there, of course—no, that's wrong, they had always been *here*—but I had never noticed them, never been really aware of them. In a sense, I guess, they've always been here. Now they always will be.

I met them at the low point in my thirty-two years of life. I came home from work one day and my wife was gone and her clothes were gone and her shampoo and her toothbrush and the pictures that used to be on the walls, everything, was gone. I guess I went into a state of shock, a trance, something. I had never really been alone in all my life. For

months afterward, I was up to my neck in hassles. Then I was up to my neck in debt. Until then I had never even *met* a lawyer. Then . . .

Well, there's more, but it doesn't matter now.

The real and constant problem was killing time, finding ways to fill the endless hours of an evening and the eternity of a weekend. With your pockets as empty as your heart, that can be pretty difficult to do.

You can't afford to go anywhere, so you find yourself around the neighborhood a lot. And you begin to notice the old people. In an Irish and Jewish neighborhood like this, in the North Bronx, there are plenty of old folks. I saw them everywhere.

They have nothing to do. All they have in the world, most of them, is time. Not time to live, but time on their hands. So they have to find or invent ways of passing the time, until time itself catches up with them. Hah. I turn poet at the end.

They go everywhere, but the trips to the bank will show you what their lives are like. They're in the bank no matter when you go, in the evenings, on

Saturday, whenever. They must go to the bank three or four times a week. They go to cash their Social Security checks, to withdraw a few dollars for groceries. They go to get the interest posted in their bankbooks. They pay the electric bill. They buy money orders to pay the other bills. They get teller's checks to send a gift of a few dollars to the grandchildren they seldom see. And they never do more than one thing at a time. Each transaction requires a separate trip to the bank. Each transaction is a major project, something to be thought about, planned, prepared for.

You have to pass the time somehow. I know. I was doing the same things myself.

Then, in the evenings, while the old ladies doze in front of their television sets, the old men go out again. And sooner or later in the evening, every evening, they meet here at Max's candy store to wait for the papers. And I wait with them.

The end of the world doesn't seem to bother them much. And honest to God, it doesn't seem to be bothering me much either. Earlier this evening, when I asked Max for this notebook out of the dusty piles in the case, he said, "Eighty-ve cents," as if nothing were happening. And I gave it to him. And I was glad he asked for it. Business as usual.

It's coming from the west, they said on the radio. Weather conditions should bring it here late this evening, maybe midnight, they said. I don't understand weather conditions. I don't understand radiation and fallout or whatever it is. And I don't understand dying. But it's happening and everybody believes it and I believe it and I want to write down

The radio
said so-and-so many
people have died
and that, after a while,
anybody who escapes the
first death will only
die more slowly.
And no one will be left.

in this notebook, everything I'm thinking tonight on this last night of our lives. The radio said so-and-so many people have died and that, after a while, anybody who escapes the first death will only die more slowly. And no one will be left. Before I left the house, I went all around the radio dial, then all around the television dial. Most of the stations were still on the air. Channel 9 was showing a Ginger Rogers movie. Billy Graham was talking on one station and I think I heard the President on another before I turned the set off.

Max just made me a chocolate egg-cream and the froth is running down the side of the glass onto the scratched and stained cold counter. I didn't ask him for it, he just made it and put it down in front of me, even though the fountain is always closed in the evening. I put forty-five cents on the counter and Max swept up the coins and threw them into the open cigar box he keeps on top of the ice cream freezer. I'm glad he took the money. But now I know that Max believes it too.

For a long time now, Max's candy store has been among the last of its kind: high stamped-tin ceiling, wood-framed glass behind the counter, telephone booths with wooden folding doors that creak with age. When I was a kid and got fifty cents for the movies on Saturday afternoon, the extra quarter of it got spent on candy at Max's. It was cheaper here than at the local theater. And if any of us kids had money left over after the movie, we would troop off to Max's for the best egg-cream in the neighborhood.

Max was still making a great egg-cream when I started coming here regularly in the evenings. In a way, that's sort of a key to understanding the place: still the same as it was when I was a kid.

Except for the old men I never noticed when I was a kid.

They begin drifting in every evening around eight o'clock. Ikey Hirsch, for example.

I guessed Ikey to be in his late seventies. Tall, almost gaunt, eyes sunken, cheeks growing more and more hollow all the time if there were anyone to notice. But his back was still straight, his head held high, neck erect. He wore his grayish white stubble of beard like a uniform, proudly. His straight shoulders tended to slouch and his posture to sag only when he talked about his daughter. He talked about her frequently—not about her present life, what she's doing now that she's obviously grown up, but about what she was like as a little girl and how smart she was and how pretty—but none of his listeners had ever seen her or even knew where she lived. We wondered about her sometimes when Ikey wasn't around. You had to talk about something.

I see I'm telling this in the past tense. Well, it'll do.

Ikey bought himself a cigar, a good one, every night. Then he would drift toward the counter stools at the back, elaborately light the cigar, and settle in for the evening. The cigar, he often said, was his greatest pleasure in life. He only smoked cigars in the evening at Max's.

If the group that gathered every evening had a leader, it was Ikey. This was unacknowledged, of course, but when the group assembled, its members tended to gather around Ikey as a focal point. Maybe it was because of the good cigar, or because he was taller and straighter than the others. Or maybe it was just because he usually arrived earlier than the rest. Whatever the specific reason was, Ikey had a dignity that the others lacked but recognized in him.

It was because of Ikey that I was accepted into the group. At first, to tell the truth, I felt very uncomfortable about the whole thing. I wasn't accustomed to spending my evenings with men forty and fifty years older than myself. And I guess I should confess that, at the beginning, I was feeling a little sorry for myself. I kept thinking that I should be out at the movies or bowling, or meeting people, preferably women—making small talk that might lead to bigger things at one of the singles bars on First Avenue.

God, I thought, I should be anywhere else. Anywhere. But sure enough, I gradually fell into the habit of showing up at Max's every evening. And after a while I was really glad to have someplace to go in the evenings, someplace where I was expected.

"Where were you, young fella?"

Ikey said that to me one evening after I missed the evening before. That was when I knew I had been accepted as part of the group of regulars. I hadn't been anywhere special, God knows, and it doesn't really matter now. But that next evening, Ikey asked me where I had been.

"We were looking for you," he said, "but you never showed up."

I didn't know what to say. Somehow simply saying that I'd fallen asleep on the couch didn't seem adequate, so I just mumbled something in reply. Ikey nodded, as if I'd explained my absence satisfactorily. I was surprised at my own reaction to his greeting. And I felt very good about it.

So from then on, I was one of the regulars. Every evening, around eight or eight-thirty, I left my empty apartment and strolled the four blocks to Max's candy store to wait for the papers.

That's what we did. That was the stated reason for going there every evening in the first place. We waited for the papers.

The truck would come about nine-thirty—it was usually as regular as clockwork—with the early edition of the next day's newspaper. By nine-thirty,

all the old men of the neighborhood would be standing around in Max's, shifting from one spot to another, drinking seltzer, smoking, talking. Ikey would puff at his cigar and, from time to time, inject a remark into the various conversations around him. A few of the men would riffle idly through magazines. One might pick up what they still called a "girlie" magazine, point out something to the rest of us, and we would all laugh. It always struck me that the laughter sounded just a little too conscientious.

A few, the Irishmen in the group mostly, often preferred to wait outside for the truck. Dan McCafferty always tried to be the first to see the truck coming. When he spotted it through the dim light and the blurred confusion of traffic, he would proudly declare that his eyes hadn't failed him yet. There it was, right on time.

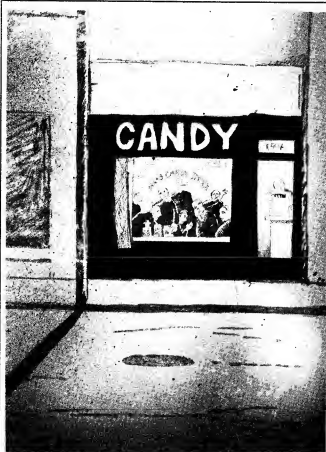
Occasionally, when the truck was late, there would be a loud and animated discussion of the possible reasons. Weather. Flat tire. The driver had picked up a hitchhiker somewhere. "Yeah," somebody would say, "a young one." We would all laugh.

Then the truck would arrive. It would pull into the bus stop at the corner because that space was always free. The driver would step back into the open body of the truck, grab a wire-tied bundle of papers, heave it off the tailgate onto the curb, and nod at the men who stood at a respectful distance back. The first bundle would be followed by five more. Then the old truck would sputter, roar, and rattle off into the night.

By the time it pulled away, somebody would have relayed the word inside that the papers were here. Max would come limping out, heft a bundle, and stagger back inside with it. The others out on the sidewalk would pick up the remaining bundles and, like a weaving bucket brigade, carry them in. The heavy bundles weighed them down and, to balance the weight, they always walked with the free arm outstretched and quivering with the strain. If one of them was left without a bundle to carry, he would hurry ahead to hold the door open and so be a part of the ritual.

Inside, the others, led by Ikey, would be shifting positions, forming a casual line. Max would clip open the first bundle and pile the newspapers on the bench near the door. Then, one by one, the men would file by, drop their coins into Max's hand, and pick up a copy of the paper.

There was never much talking after that. A few of them might linger briefly inside, but soon they'd drift out after the others. They might stand for a minute outside, on the corner, but shortly they would say goodnight and each of them would disappear slowly into the darkness, heading homeward on unsteady legs, each with a newspaper carelessly folded and crumpled under his arm.



We're sitting here now. We're waiting. I'm writing this at the counter in between bits of conversation. Nobody asks me what I'm doing. Either they know . . . or else it's been so long since they wrote anything themselves that they no longer understand this feeble attempt at permanence.

Ikey arrived late tonight, and I wondered if there were something, some last minute thing, he had to do before leaving home. I hope so.

It must have been about a quarter to nine before we saw his thin form coming through the doorway. He was walking slowly and his head drooped forward, not much, but it was unusual for him. He looked tired. The thin wisps of hair around the bald top of his head looked thinner than they had. Under the white stubble of his beard, his skin had a sallow color, a hint of sickly pale yellow.

"Evening, Ikey," several voices said.

Ikey nodded and walked slowly—a little stiffly, I thought—toward the back of the store. He sat on a stool with his back to the counter. Now that he was in his usual place, our group unconsciously rearranged itself around him.

"Where you been, Ikey?" Sam Greene asked. "We've been looking for you. Almost time for the papers to be up." The truck, of course, wouldn't be due for another forty-five minutes, but that's the way time is measured here.

"Hey," Old Mike said, drawing a trembling finger across his lips, trying to look thoughtful, "we thought maybe you found yourself a girlfriend." He looked around the group for approval of the idea. "We thought some little honey might be keeping you late."

A few of the men laughed. Someone began coughing, a hard dry cough, and Jimmy Fanning repeated, "Some little honey."

Ikey said nothing. He just lifted his head a little and raised one bony hand. I noticed, for the first time, how swollen the knuckles were. Then, in a long sweep, he brought the arm down and across his body in a gesture of disgust.

"Ehhh!" he growled from deep in his throat, a prolonged strangling sound.

We were all startled. Before anyone could say anything, he mumbled, "What can you do? What can you do?" and shook his head from side to side. I was on the fringes of the circle around him and could barely hear his voice.

Sam was tentatively placing a hand on Ikey's shoulder when another voice interrupted. I was glad of an excuse to look away. I think the others were, too.

"Hey, Ikey," Max called from the front of the store. He was still standing by the cash register. "What's the matter? You maybe don't like my cigars anymore? You don't even buy a cigar tonight? What you want to do, Ikey, put me out of business maybe?"

"He don't feel so good," Old Mike said.

"I feel okay," Ikey said, but his voice sounded thin and breathless. He turned on his stool and faced Max up at the front. "Max," he said, a little louder, "come here, bring me one of my cigars. I don't feel right without my cigar."

Max bent and reached under the counter where he kept the better cigars, then came back and handed one to Ikey. "I thought maybe you give up smoking," he said.

They exchanged money and cigar. No one said anything until Ikey had the cigar burning properly. Then Max returned to the cash register and the others began talking quietly. I moved to the back and wrote some more of this.

It was quiet for a while until Max called out, "It's raining."

"Raining?" the others said. "I's raining?"

I left the counter, went to the front door, and looked out. Misty rain was blowing along the dark street, glinting in the light from the door and under the streetlamps. The sidewalk was already dark and wet. I pushed the door open a couple of inches. A chilly September breeze had sprung up with the rain. I couldn't tell what direction it was coming from. I went back inside to the counter. In the next few minutes each of the men, except for Ikey, strolled to the door to inspect the rain personally. But no one said anything. The radio in the afternoon had said the rain would bring it sooner. I wondered if the others knew.

Ikey still sat silently, looking at his hands and slowly massaging them together, kneading the swollen knuckles. Everyone but him had been to the door to look at the rain.

Dan McCafferty broke the silence. "Makes the roads slippery," he said. "Might hold up the truck."

We looked at him.

Ikey's head came up. "Think so?" he said. I thought his voice sounded different.

"Sure," Dan said. "Could be. Damn rain stirs up all that muck and grease in the road." He snorted. "Don't tell me about it. I used to drive a truck. Gets slippery as hell out there right after the rain starts. Gotta take it easy with a truck. Yeah, papers might be late tonight."

After that, we all stayed inside except for Dan McCafferty. Every few minutes he pulled his sweater tight around him and ducked out into the rain to look for the truck. He returned each time to report, "No sign of it yet."

I got into a one-sided conversation with Old Mike. He was telling me about his first heart attack. Every now and then I glanced over at Ikey. He still wasn't talking, but he seemed more alert than he had been. He was watching Dan McCafferty. Each time Dan went outside to watch for the truck, Ikey's eyes followed him.

It drew close to nine-thirty. In between watching Dan McCafferty, Ikey was watching the big minute hand on the clock over the door. Old Mike was starting the story of his heart attack over again from the beginning.

Finally it was nine-thirty, and Dan went outside again to look for the truck. He was gone a long time. When he came back, his sweater stained dark from the rain, he just shook his head. I turned quickly to look at Ikey. He was staring at Dan. His eyes looked unusually bright.

"Maybe it won't come," Dan said quietly.

No one answered. We all shifted positions uneasily. I went to the front door to look out at the rain.

A few seconds later, I caught a sudden movement out of the corner of my eye. I half turned to look, then realized that the movement was a reflection in the glass of the door. As I watched the dim and rain-smudged figures, I saw that Ikey had stood up and was walking toward me, toward the door. He appeared unsteady, but something about the way he held himself made him look very determined. I stepped aside. Without looking at me or any of the others, he opened the door and went out into the dark and rain-drenched street. The door swung shut behind him. I moved back to it as it closed and, almost touching the cold glass, was just in time to see his figure shambling slowly around the corner and out of sight.

Behind me, Old Mike was starting to say something. The words didn't register in my mind, but I could hear the sudden fright and loneliness in his voice. My thoughts were following Ikey.

We were alone.

It was wet outside, the sidewalk gleaming with puddles, the road black and slick. The sewer opening at the corner of the curb was beginning to back up. Two cars raced by in opposite directions, ignoring the traffic lights that obstinately continued to flash red and green into the night. In an apartment building across the street, there seemed to be more lights on in the windows than usual. Fighting back the darkness, maybe.

And then Ikey came back. He just came striding back around the corner, head ducked low to keep the rain from his face, but otherwise erect. I opened the door for him.

In a few seconds he was settled inside again, half standing, half sitting, by a stool at the counter. The old men moved close to him, but uncertainly, mumbling, stroking their stubby chins, eyeing each other. I joined them. Max watched from the cash register.

When Ikey spoke, we were all startled.

"Max," he called up to the front. "Gimme one of them cigars, the good ones." His voice was firm, loud.

Max brought the cigar and Ikey dug in his frayed pockets for the money. Max took it and dumped it into the old cigar box. We looked at Ikey.

"Long night ahead of us," he mumbled around the cigar. "Damn rain is holding up the truck. Slippery as hell out there, you know." He puffed on the cigar. "We'll just have to wait, that's all."

It's twenty minutes after midnight now. I've moved down to the end of the counter while I write this. Nothing has happened so far. Every few minutes a car screeches by outside, or we hear someone running past. It's still raining, and the wind has gotten stronger. Once a telephone rang in one of the old booths, but nobody answered it.

Sam Greene is flipping through a tattered copy of one of the weekly papers, licking his thumb every time he turns a page. Jimmy Fanning is looking at a paperback, holding it awkwardly with arthritic fingers unused to handling books. Old Mike is looking at a "girlie" magazine and shaking his head. Max is up at the front of the store in his usual place, leaning on the cash register and looking out at the rain. Ikey is sitting at the counter. He has another cigar now. The rest of the men are standing near him.

Ikey is turning around slowly to look at me. He takes the cigar out of his mouth and waves it at me.

"Come join us down here, son," he says. "Don't be staying by yourself."

So I won't write any more after this. I'll go and stand beside Ikey Hirsch and we'll wait for the papers together, these old men and I. And we'll wait as long as we have to. **12**



THE INNKEEPER'S STORY HAD NO ENDING—UNTIL TWO
STRANGERS ENTERED ...

THE INN OF THE DOVE

by Gordon Linzner

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Coarse rushes tickled Muramochi Ichiro's calves below drawn-in cotton trousers as he knelt on the round mat, rump resting on heels. On his shoulder, a milk-white dove watched his chopsticks carry a fat grain of boiled rice from his bowl to almost touch her beak. She accepted the offering with dignity. Muramochi smiled and sought another tidbit.

Rain drummed on the thatch roof and, in one corner, seeped underneath to fill a wooden bucket. The pattering without became louder as the door of the inn slid open.

Two burly foot soldiers entered. Their leather breastplates were moisture-blackened; water dripped in runnels from austere helmets. One wore a full beard that glittered, bedewed, in the flicker from the single oil lamp. His comrade was moustached, but had plucked his beard-hair to better display a battle scar from his right ear to his chin.

"Sake!" roared the bearded man. "Warm rice-wine for two weary, sodden bushi separated from their regiment by this miserable weather!"

Muramochi, selecting another rice grain, barely glanced at the pair. The dove, however, was agitated. Her talons pinched flesh through Muramochi's thin smock. Fapping her wings as though to take flight, she burst into frantic song. Muramochi listened attentively. When she'd finished, he turned to the strangers with renewed interest.

The scarred man shook off his helmet, returned the look, and offered a smile. His teeth were fashionably blackened.

"You'll never satisfy your dove with rice," he said. "Remember the children's song: she'll want beans to eat."

Muramochi acknowledged the advice with a bow. "She has been content, so far."

The beard rumbled. "Where hides our dog of a host? We have good coppers for him to cheat us of, with his overpriced refreshments and vermin-ridden sleeping mats."

Muramochi stood. The bird fluttered to a perch set high on a dimly lit wall. "I am that dog," he confessed, bowing again. "I promise that you shall receive full value for your investment. As to vermin, I will personally attend to their extermination." His lips formed the softest of smiles.

The eyes above the beard widened. "This is astounding! All of the innkeepers we've met have been

old men or former farmers. You are in your prime, and of powerful mien. Why, in our armor you could pass as a bushi! Is that not so, brother?"

"Indeed, Kichiji, he might be taken for a samurai!"

Muramochi bowed again, "You are perceptive, sirs. Until last year, I was samurai to a noble lord, and took pride in my post. Kichiji, did I hear you called?"

Kichiji combed rainwater from his beard. "Isochiri Kichiji. This is my younger brother, Isochiri Naru."

"I am Muramochi Ichiro."

"Ichiro? Firstborn? Your family must be doubly proud. But how do you come to keep an inn in this desolate country village?"

Naru chuckled, unlacing his armor. "Some indiscretions with the lord's wife, I'll wager."

Muramochi shook his head and turned to step behind the screen that separated the large main room from the *irori*, the square sunken hearth where food and sake were heated. His lips thinned. He looked back at the men shrugging off water-soaked leggings and said, "Yes, you should hear the story."

"Sake first. Then your tale," Kichiji ordered.

"As you desire."

While the rice wine warmed, Muramochi brought out two straw mats less worn than his own, and a small wooden brazier. Fresh coals glowed in the brazier's metal-lined interior, warding the chill from the outer man as the liquor promised to ease the inner. A few moments later, Muramochi sat facing the bushi, neither of whom noticed how little he drank.

"It is no shame to admit that I was not the strongest nor most skilled samurai in my lord's employ," the innkeeper began. "The poorest warrior among us would be the pride of any other court, save the Emperor's. Fortune selected me, however, to be husband to the lovely Kiku."

"Ah! She was so young when we met that her eyebrows had never been plucked! Amaterasu the sun goddess, lured from her cave to gaze on the world's first mirror, could not have beheld a fairer face! The famed Kesa Gozen, dying in her husband's place to preserve her honor, could not embody more nobility, purer virtue, greater bravery! Her eyes—"

"We get the idea," Naru growled. "You loved the woman. Say so and get on with it."

Kichiji nodded. "My brother speaks for me. This paragon of womanhood is not presently in evidence and therein, I suspect, lies the heart of your tale."

Muramochi scowled at the bushi. "It is true, sirs, that I am a poor poet, and my words clumsy. Still, your interruption is discourteous."

Friend innkeeper," replied Kichiji, "we are rude foot soldiers, of little education and less patience. The court to which you are accustomed may praise verbiage, seek beauty in the nuance of a well-turned phrase or apt imagery. To hold our interest, though, you must tell your story simply."

Muramochi spoke through clenched teeth. "Her voice was as sweet as my dove's song!"

As if this were a cue, the white bird trilled a melody from her perch on the east wall. Finished, the dove cocked her head to one side and glanced at each man in turn.

Kichiji threw back his head, laughing with surprise. Even the dour Naru managed a grin that curled his scar like an earthworm driven from the soil.

"An excellent trick, innkeeper! Perhaps we misjudged you!"

Muramochi inclined his head to the bearded speaker. This was as close as the two would get to an apology. "Things are rarely as they seem," he chided, before going on.

"In short, we fell in love and exchanged three cups of sake to affirm our sacred vows. The gods of luck granted us seven months of earthly joy, one month for each god." Muramochi's eyes glazed as he recalled those times.

"And then?" barked Naru.

"One night I found my beloved Kiku dead, slain by her own hand with one of my swords. The point protruded only a *bu* from her back, less than the width of my fingertip, but the wooden floor was deeply stained with her precious blood."

"Are you sure she was as happy as you?" Naru asked.

Muramochi started. "Quite sure."

Kichiji raised a placating hand. "My brother means no offense. To take one's life, however, requires a reason."

"She had a reason. Her left sleeve held her death-poem. You would call it a silly thing, a young girl's naive impressions of life's obligations opposed to the free-flying existence of a bird—to be exact, a dove. I will not recite so personal a verse. I carried it for several days, rereading it for comfort in my grief, before I noticed more writing on the other side. She had addressed a final message to me."

"Ah!" said Kichiji, rubbing his hands together. "Now we come to the meat of the nut."

"Just so. While I'd been on a routine patrol, three common soldiers sought succor at my home. Kiku offered them food and drink, according to our custom, but when these rough men saw her beauty they hungered for more than sustenance. Our servant was visiting relatives in Kyoto; they were alone in my house. The soldiers forced themselves on my wife, each in turn and then again. They left her bruised and bleeding, her kimono wrapped above her hips as though she were a city-bred whore. No—the poorest geisha would not have been so ill-treated."

Naru coughed, setting down his sake bowl with a clatter. He looked to his brother, but the bearded soldier's attention was fixed on Muramochi. "These are restless times," Kichiji was saying. "If every raped woman took her life, we should soon be bereft of females."

Muramochi glowered. "All times are restless. Kiku was a woman of honor. She felt she had brought shame upon me, that she had not resisted as she ought; for if she had, her letter said, her virtue would have been intact and three corpses decorated our home."

"Against such odds?" Naru exclaimed. "Impossible!"

"So I would have told her, had I been there. As I was not, she chose *seppuku*. I swore vengeance, of course. My lord would not grant me leave to seek Kiku's disgracers. I resigned. A ronin may do things that samurai cannot."

"Spare us the details of your search, please," said Naru. "We grant you found the knaves. Let us hear of your justice."

Muramochi no longer seemed to resent these intrusions on his narrative. It was well into the ninth hour, the hour of the rat, and his patrons grew drowsy. With a smile Muramochi said, "You anticipate too much. Two days' journey from my home, a fledgling fell from its nest, landing before me on the

**'Is this honorable?'
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road."

Naru clapper his hands. "An omen!"

"An omen," the innkeeper agreed. "I set aside my quest to nurture the bird, which matured into the dove you see. We stopped here for a night. When morning came, the bird refused to leave. I bought the business from the peasant who'd owned it, and here we have been ever since."

Kichiji stared at the speaker in disbelief. "Is that your tale?"

Muramochi nodded. "We do little trade, but there is enough to feed her and me."

"Pah!" snorted Naru, rubbing his scar. "A poor ending if I ever heard one. You're no storyteller! This sake is cold; bring us more before the rice."

"And do not accompany it with another of your boring tales," Kichiji added.

"I regret my efforts to amuse have displeased you. I shall devise a more satisfactory resolution to my history."

Kichiji grunted and turned his bearded face away. Muramochi wordlessly fetched more sake, then slipped behind the screen to prepare the rice, leaving the bushi brothers alone.

The Isochiris had marched many *ken* through rain and mud and cold that day. Their limbs were weary. Warmed by the liquor, and disinclined to further conversation, Naru and Kichiji sat and sipped in silence. The rain thrummed steadily overhead. Slowly Kichiji's head sank forward until it was pillowed against his chest by his beard. Naru's eyelids grew heavy. Only wartime discipline kept their bodies erect when they wished to stretch out on the bare floor.

However, a trained soldier, even a common bushi, never fully sleeps. Soft thuds brought them around, Kichiji first. The bearded man reached hungrily for the rice bowl nearest him. His hand halted in midair. The younger brother, looking to his own bowl, noticed the same thing at the same moment. They exchanged glances.

"No better at running an inn than at telling stories," Kichiji spat. "Innkeeper!" How dare you insult us by presenting rice with chopsticks standing . . ." His voice faded as he turned to their host.

Muramochi chiro stood before the bushi. Fierce laughter shone in his eyes. Well might they be shocked into silence! His lacquered steel breastplate glittered in the dimly lit room, as did the metal plates covering long gauntlets of fabric on his arms. His baggy trousers were now tucked into shin-guards, above bearskin boots. An angry ornate dragon topped his elaborate helmet. The chin-straps were not fastened; they tied so tightly that speech would have been impossible.

"Now I can embellish my tale," Muramochi said

softly.

Naru, realizing his jaw hung open, shut it with a snap. "A childish display," he growled.

"Absolutely," his brother agreed. "We never doubted your truthfulness, innkeeper. Your inferior sense of narrative offended us."

"Have I displeased my guests again?" Muramochi asked in the same quiet tone. Two blades hung from his belt: the short katana and the long tachi. A leather-gloved hand rested on the hilt of each.

Kichiji pretended not to see this. "You have, grievously. Look at these chopsticks. To tender your wares as though making an offering to the spirits of the dead is outrageous!"

Muramochi smiled. "Not at all. The minute you entered my inn, you were dead men."

The brothers leapt to their feet. "What shabby hospitality!" Naru protested.

"It is better than you deserve. My wife was raped almost a year ago to the day."

"What is that to—?"

In the village of Aiknu. I see you understand now. Who was the third bushi?"

No reply.

Muramochi drew his tachi. "You owe me that much," he said.

"Our brother Takamori," Naru sullenly replied. "He was killed in battle. An arrow through the eye."

"I thank the gods for sharing my burden." Muramochi stepped forward.

"Is this honorable?" Kichiji cried. "Our armor and weapons lie behind us. We are defenseless."

"How honorable was the attack of three armed soldiers on a lone woman?"

Naru stepped backwards, keeping an eye on Muramochi's keen sword-edge. From his pile of belongings he withdrew his own tachi. Muramochi did not interfere.

"He's a swaggering braggart, brother! Come! We can slice him like a snake and be on our way before the eighth hour!"

The dove fluttered once around the room and returned to her perch, warbling anxiously. Kichiji laughed, rushing to his own baggage. "Hai! We'll roast his omen for our dinner!"

Muramochi's smile fled. His eyes grew hard as rage flowed through his veins. Snarling, he raised the tachi for attack.

Covering his brother, Naru ran forward, feinted, and jumped back. Without his armor, he depended on agility to avoid Muramochi's thrusts. Using a sword as a shield was a good way to ruin an expensive blade.

Muramochi swung the long sword to discourage Naru, but wasted no effort on strokes that could not reach his opponent. There were two men to deal with; every blow must count.

THE INN OF THE DOVE

Emboldened, Naru fainted again, his point striking the innkeeper's breastplate. He retreated at once, lest his weapon catch in the etched ornamentation and give Muramochi his necessary second's advantage. Again the armored man made no offensive move.

The bushi laughed. This would be soon ended!

Kichiji approached from the left. Muramochi unsheathed his katana. With weapons in both hands, he could not maintain a defensive posture, but that did not matter. What happened to him was unimportant, if these two died.

Kichiji's first feint sliced only air.

Naru's blade scraped along the metal plates on Muramochi's right arm, slipping under one to slash fabric and skin. Blood oozed as the scarred man dodged the return blow.

Kichiji aimed for the neck. Muramochi ducked. The blow knocked off his helmet and opened a deep gash in his forehead. Muramochi rushed the bearded man, who hurriedly gave ground, almost stumbling over a straw mat.

It was Naru's turn again. His sword, tasting blood, thirsted for more. One sweep could divorce the innkeeper's head from his shoulders.

As Muramochi intended, Naru's approach was overconfident. The ronin spun around, ignoring Kichiji for the moment. His heavy blade clove flesh and bone. Naru's sword arm, severed above the elbow, struck the floor. The stunned bushi followed it.

Muramochi turned to the elder brother. Kichiji's anger should make him careless as well.

Then his world went black.

Blood from his gash had dripped into his eyes.

Kichiji chuckled at Muramochi's predicament, then fell silent. Slowly, wary of loose floorboards, he circled the straw mats to creep toward the innkeeper. Naru would be avenged.

Muramochi was reluctant to sheathe either weapon, for Kichiji's attack could come from any side. He raised his left arm to staunch the crimson flow with his forearm. The gauntlet's plates further tore the wound. He must fight blind. Groans from behind told him that Naru, mortally wounded, was not yet dead. If the scarred man had strength enough for another blow...

Kichiji stopped a sword's length from the innkeeper, seeking a vulnerable spot for his thrust. The exposed throat seemed likely. He raised the tachi, not daring to breathe for fear of betraying his position.

With a cry, the dove plunged from her perch toward the bearded man. Kichiji dodged her beak and claws. The breeze of her flight ruffled his hair. He was proud that he'd not exposed himself even with a stifled curse at the surprising attack. Hearing a bird could not help Muramochi locate an opponent.

Yet the innkeeper leaned forward suddenly,

forming a narrow arc with both blades. The weapons found their target at the same moment. Kichiji collapsed with a moan, spurting blood and entrails.

Muramochi spun around, anticipating a final attack by Naru. The latter only groaned. Flitting wings cooled the blood on Muramochi's cheek as the dove regained his shoulder. The bird issued a brief, soulful melody. Muramochi nodded and sank to the floor. His harsh breathing eased. He tore a cotton trouser leg into strips to wipe his eyes and bind his wound.

His first sight was Naru's agonized face. Incredible that the bushi still lived, with so much blood lost! Still, the dimming eyes foretold his end.

"We were ordinary foot soldiers," Naru accused, "marching into a battle none of us might survive. I do not apologize for what we did. You cannot blame us."

Muramochi stripped off a blood-soaked leather glove. His bare finger stroked the dove's breast. The bird cooed.

"Nor dare you blame me for what I have done tonight," the innkeeper replied. "No matter. It is ended. My wife's soul is unburdened, free to seek its destiny."

Naru coughed. Crimson stained his black teeth, spilt down his chin, tracing the scar-line. "My arm..."

"Shall be buried with you."

Naru grimaced thanks. As if in acknowledgment, the dove nodded at him, then cooed approvingly in Muramochi's ear.

"A ... remarkable ... bird," Naru gasped. Then his eyes, still open, saw no more.

Muramochi sat still, breathing shallowly, stroking the dove's feathers. The bird chirruped impatiently. Sighing, he stood up. The clatter of his armor jarred after the thick silence. For the first time, he realized that the patter on the roof was gone. The storm had ended.

Muramochi walked stiffly to the inn's door and slid it open. Cool, fresh air gently greeted him. Good. It would clear the stench of sweat and death from the interior. Gore tightened on his face.

The bird's tune was cheerful. Had Muramochi any close neighbors to be wakened by the conflict, they would have wondered at the song of a day bird at the hour of the ox, with dawn half a night away. More curious still was the sight of such a bird winging through the blackness, away from warmth and light, food and shelter.

Muramochi stared as the white dot vanished in the moonless blackness. A tear etched through the blood on his cheek. Words came too late. He spoke them anyway.

"Happiness go with you, Kiku." ☾



DEADLINE

by Mel Gilden

ANY OLD WRITER HAS A MUSÉ. JOHN BLAKESLY HARDIN HAD A DEMON!

When John Blakesly Hardin, the novelist, sat down before his typewriter and began to type, a small demon appeared sitting on his left shoulder. Hardin did not stop typing until the demon said, "Hey, mac, how 'bout a beer? Wouldn't a pizza go good right now? Look at those bags under your eyes. You need a nap."

Hardin leaned back in his chair. The demon flashed from his shoulder to sit on the typewriter. They contemplated each other. Hardin said, "I have a proposition for you."

The demon clasped one knee in his hands and rocked up and back on his scaly bottom. He said, "That's why I like you, Hardin. We've been together over forty years, and you're still full of surprises."

"I'm glad you've been entertained. You certainly haven't made my life any easier."

"It's not my job."

"Yes, yes." Hardin waved away the words impatiently. "Let me tell you what I have in mind."

The demon leaned back on his elbows.

Hardin said, "Deadline, I am getting old. The

DEADLINE

doctors tell me my heart is weak. I could go at any time. I feel that I have one last novel in me, a great work, but I'm afraid that with you constantly attempting to lead me astray, I will not be able to finish it before I die."

The demon shrugged. "Leading you astray is my job. You sit down to write, and I'm supposed to tempt you with more attractive alternatives."

"So you have, so you have. Despite the fact that you were always just as curious about what would happen next as I was."

The demon sighed. "It's no fun being damned. When I was alive I loved to read stories. My punishment is to keep you from writing them."

"Oddly enough," Hardin said, "we've both achieved a surprising amount of success."

Deadline nodded.

"Very well. My proposition is this: You leave me alone for the next three months —"

"I can't do that."

"Will you wait? You leave me alone for the next three months and I will offer you a student in one of my creative writing classes."

"Doesn't your student already have his own demon?"

"Her own demon. But no. She is at the moment only considering a writing career. With encouragement from me, she will no doubt succumb."

"She?" Deadline said.

"Yes."

Deadline rubbed his chin.

"Let's face it," Hardin said, "we have both been at this for a long time. We know each other's tricks. I might be able to finish the novel even with you bothering me. On the other hand, my heart may not last. I'm giving you the opportunity to be more effective in your job."

"But my Boss —"

"You're already damned. What more can he do to you?"

Deadline rolled his eyes. "You'd be surprised," he said.

Hardin leaned closer to Deadline and said, "Do it for literature."

At last Deadline nodded. "For literature," he said.

In the crowded supermarket the shopping cart of the dark, handsome young man ran with a crash into the shopping cart of the beautiful, proper young woman.

"Uh, excuse me," he said, and smiled.

She smiled back, and began to steer her cart around his.

He said, "I've been all over this store looking for the catsup. Do you know where it is?"

"Aisle seven, I think. I'll show you, if you'd like."

"Thank you."

Each pushing a cart, he followed her through the store. There was the catsup in aisle seven. He picked up a bottle and put it into his cart. Neither of them seemed eager to leave.

"My friends call me Deadline," the young man said.

"That's an interesting name. Mine is Carol."

"I'd like to see you again sometime, if I may, under less hectic conditions," Deadline said.

"Not tonight. I am in John Blakesly Hardin's writing class at the university, and I have an assignment."

"Too bad. I have passes to see the *Star Trek* movie this evening."

"Oh." Carol thought for a moment. "What time do we have to be there?"

"Eight."

"Maybe," Carol said.

They made a date for seven-thirty.

At seven o'clock, Deadline arrived at Carol's apartment with a bottle of chablis. Carol, wearing jeans and an old t-shirt, let him in. She said, "I wasn't expecting you for half an hour."

"That's right," Deadline said, and snapped his fingers. "Sorry. Would you like some wine?"

They had a wonderful time at the movies. In the following weeks, he called her while she was sleeping, while she was writing, and while she was thinking complex thoughts that were impossible to reconstruct. He invited her to movies, discos, and restaurants when she had better things to do.

One night, at a posh literary party, another dark, handsome young man came to their table. He bowed to Carol and said, "Good evening. It is a pleasure to meet you after all that Deadline has told me."

"Do I know you?" Deadline said.

"You do," the man said, and glared at him. "I am Snafu, remember?"

"Of course, of course. Well, Snafu, it's been a long time." Deadline laughed nervously. "Would you care to sit down?"

"No thanks. But I'd like to speak with you alone for a moment." He turned to Carol. "Business," he said. "Very dull stuff."

Deadline followed Snafu to an upstairs room. Snafu said, "We won't be interrupted here."



"Even as we speak, she is meeting a demon who has been physically and emotionally tailored to her wants and needs. She will forget you instantly."

"What's going on?" Deadline said.

"We finally caught up with you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that the sooner you return to John Blakesly Hardin the easier it will go for all of us."

"What about Carol?"

"Even as we speak she is meeting a demon who has been physically and emotionally tailored to her wants and needs. She will forget you instantly. He will encourage her to give up her silly writing to become his wife and helpmate."

"Will she?"

"That's entirely up to her, but the Boss suspects that she will."

"Oh," Deadline looked at the carpeting.

Snafu said, "ohn Blakesly Hardin is in his study right now, composing his novel. It is actually almost as good as he thinks it is. I suggest you go to him immediately and try as you've never tried before to keep him from writing any further."

"Very well," Deadline said sadly. They both vanished in a cloud of evil-smelling smoke.

Deadline appeared sitting on John Blakesly Hardin's left shoulder and said, "Hey, mac, wouldn't a cold beer go good right now?"

Hardin typed another few words and stopped. He leaned back in his chair. "It's not three months," he said.

Deadline, again sitting on Hardin's typewriter, said, "I got caught."

"I see. Well. It was worth a try. Now if you'll get off my typewriter, I'll continue."

"I know this great Italian restaurant," Deadline said.

"No." Hardin smiled broadly.

"The dishes need washing."

"No." Hardin laughed.

"You've got to balance your checkbook."

"No." Hardin laughed harder.

"Sharpen some pencils."

"No." Hardin's whole body shook. He laughed so hard he made no sound but a wheezing noise.

"Take a shower."

Hardin shook his head. His face was reddening.

"A nap."

Hardin began to cough. He clutched at his chest. His eyes were open wide and empty.

"Hardin!" Deadline cried.

Hardin slumped forward onto his typewriter. Spittle drooled from his mouth onto the keys. Hardin got up, leaving his body where it was.

"You're dead," Deadline said.

"Correct. Aneurysm, just as the doctors predicted. And I have to go pretty soon."

"But who'll finish your novel?"

"You can, if you like."

"Me? What about your colleagues?"

"Not one of them knows as much about me and my work as you do. No, I'm afraid that you're the only one qualified."

"But you yourself could—"

"You know that it takes some time to adjust to being dead. After that, I may no longer have an interest in writing. Another perspective. Another career."

"But—"

Hardin faded slowly, waving at Deadline, and was soon gone.

Deadline looked around the room. He walked up and back. He grew himself up to human size and gently lowered Hardin's body to the floor. He sat down in the chair and read the pages that Hardin had already completed. When he was done, he set them on the table and turned to the typewriter. He read the page that Hardin had not had a chance to finish. He smile, shrugged, wiggled his fingers over the keyboard, and began to type.

A small demon appeared sitting on Deadline's left shoulder and said, "There's a great old movie on tv right now."

Deadline stopped and fearfully turned to look at him. "Snafu!" he said.

"Correct."

"What are you doing here?"

"You're a writer now. I'm here to see that you never finish Hardin's novel."

"But I'm a demon too."

"Just so," Snafu said. "Other times, other torments. No one escapes." **12**



EATS

SCENICRUISER

THE

by
Peter S.

A FATALLY EROTIC ENCOUNTER JUST OFF THE HIGHWAY TO ETERNITY.

How many single-car accidents occur in the middle of the night on deserted roads? Mothers with children asleep in the back seat, having taken no liquor or drugs, all of a sudden flip their Pintos and die on steel pyres. Is it the car? The driver, lulled to sleep behind the wheel by the evangelist from Austin, Texas, on the radio? Or is it that the land reaches out and shoves the road, brushes at the cars which crawl through the branded wrinkles on its face?

I know.

You may remember me; they called me the Scenicrusher. I pitched for the New York Mets. Now I drive the Interstate at night. Alone. And every night I meet the same silver and chrome Chrysler Cordoba. She enters the on-ramp; every night I refuse her the highway; I run her off the road; I smash her. As I whip past, I catch a glimpse of the car tipping over, bouncing on the side of its fender, spinning like a broken wagon wheel. As I speed away, the first plume of flame, yellow against the stormy sky,

erupts from the highway, a beacon which shrinks away to a pinpoint in the rearview mirror, then disappears completely into the night.

Late at night the road belongs to an occasional semi-rig, a rare passenger car, and me. The land is dark, so dark that there is no line between the sky and the dense woods bordering the road. It is black; it is humid. The air lies on the ground like a hen over chicks, blood-warm and smothering.

Nobody can sit alone by the side of that road for long; soon there is the need to drive. Then tires hum against pasty black asphalt; rubber squeezes tar in its molecular embrace, then looses and spins away, each touch sucking a bit of tar from the roadway, each parting tearing a bit of rubber from the tire.

Lovers do not cease loving they wear away the love with constant use, as a pitcher wears away his ability with use. That's how I learned what I know.

The first time the Cordoba rolled up on me, I pulled over to let her in. She was a beauty, her silver



AND SILVER LADY

Altman

sides polished till they gleamed, the chrome a whiter shade at the edges of the doors and fenders. The red taillights, amber sidelights, and blue-white headlights made her look like a bizarre deep-water monster, one of those fish with no eyes and with lights dangling from its spiny ridges.

The Cordoba came up fast on my right side. She had an orange I ♥ NY sticker on the trunk where the license plate should have been. A couple sat close together in the car; they were probably lovers. I slid over into the left lane, giving her room to enter, but she shot across the highway towards me. At the last moment, she relented a tiny bit, enough for me to avoid her.

The glare of her taillights burned like blood in my eyes. I screamed, outraged, as I mashed the brake. The right front fender of my Pontiac banged against the concrete center barrier, pleating and slashing the front tire. The wheel shook my hands, rattling my arms.

Fear and rage burst through me. I howled; I cursed. Foam collected at the corners of my mouth as I damned the disappearing Cordoba. I beat my fists

against the steering wheel. Only the damage to my car kept me from chasing that silver demon and running her into a ditch.

I clattered to a halt against the divider and crawled out to look at the damage. The fender had crumpled inward, bending against the concrete, and had turned a sharp edge against the tire, like a lathe chisel on turning wood. I went around the back and opened the trunk with shaking hands.

It was there, standing behind my car, looking back at the rubber marks on the asphalt, that I first felt the hatred of the land. The random violence of the attack unnerved me in the same way that any random violence does.

It breaks the rhythm.

When I was still in high school, I learned about rhythm and wear. Every night before I pitched, I'd take my father's car out and drive. Not with my girl friend Mary Ann, or even with any of the other players. Just me and the car, a 1958 Pontiac, the one with the row of stars along the sides of the tailfins. Sitting there behind the wheel with the engine throbbing against my thighs, I rolled through

***The road felt
unstable under
my wheels,
as though
the asphalt
had melted in
the heat of
my blood and
was slipping
under the
weight of my
rolling tires.***

the night listening to XERF pump Chuck Berry and Jesus through the hiss and fade of the stars.

That's where I got the name ScenicrUISer. When Mary Ann asked me what I did on the road, I tried to explain. Then I told her I drove to look at the scenery. She understood that a lot better. The nickname stuck; Mary Ann didn't.

My shoulder eventually loosened with no special injury except age. It happens. The pinpoint accuracy blurred. There were too many walks; there was too little margin for error at the corners. Batters started hitting me as I compensated and pitched for the center of the plate. The curve, my big round-house curve, sometimes flew away, or worse, hung high, a fat home run offered.

After the games the self-loathing and fear were almost too much to bear. I soothed them the only way I knew how. I took the Firebird out of the basement garage, pointed it down the FDR Drive, and followed the road, looking for that fickle rhythm.

Mary Ann took the kids and left. She said there was no use in trying to keep up the marriage with me on the road so much, and riding the highways all night when I was home.

When my pitching career was over, I had lots of money and nothing to do.

So I rode the Interstates.

A state trooper pulled up behind me as I worked on the car and made out an accident report. When he asked me the license number of the Cordoba, I told him "I love New York." He looked at me blankly. I explained; he shook his head. Then he took my driver's license and asked me to take a breathalyzer test.

When he was satisfied that I wasn't drunk or drugged, he directed me to the next rest stop, where I could buy a new tire and get home. My spare was one of those tiny ones only good for a few miles at a time.

While a mechanic mounted the new tire, I wandered into the restaurant to buy a cup of coffee. There were five other people in there: a waitress dressed in faded Howard Johnson pink with a stained white half-apron, a big, sweaty black behind the grill in soiled whites, a pair of kid tracers hovering over cups of coffee in one of the booths while waiting for their uppers to kick in.

And the blonde.

She was in a corner booth, her platinum hair piled like cotton candy over her pale face. She could have come right from the Miss Oklahoma pageant. She had an open, regular face, just beginning to fall the smallest bit. Her smile hovered on the verge of lust.

She was wearing a white sequined sweater over a white tank top. A nipple stood out, thick beneath the stretch material. Around her wrist was a silver bracelet; silver wire earrings dangled from her earlobes like flattened teardrops—or tiny nooses. She sat with a bowl of chili and a beer in front of her and stared out the broad panes of glass at the empty highway. A diabetic's kit lay open beside her glass: a small vial, cotton swabs, and a thin, shiny steel syringe nestled in black velvet. Maybe she was waiting for someone; maybe she was hoping someone would come by. A silver lady.

I slid onto a stool at the counter and nodded at the waitress. She drew a cup of coffee without my saying anything and brought it over to me.

"Wanna see a menu?" she asked, but she knew I didn't; she didn't even carry one. Her voice was tired; her feet were probably killing her, and she probably had three kids waiting for her down the road in an apartment too small for one. Most likely her husband was an independent trucker who hadn't been home in a couple of years. Every time someone came through the restaurant door she looked up, half-expecting it to be him, praying it would be him, to lean over the counter and lift her out from behind. He never would, but it was too late for her anyway. She was mated to the rhythm of the highway.

I shook my head. "Want cream? Sugar?" I smiled and sipped the steaming liquid. Rose was embossed on her name tag. "Storm's comin'," she said.

She wanted to talk. "Been working here long, Rose?" I asked.

"Long enough." She tucked her blouse back into her apron and leaned pudgy elbows on the counter beside me. "What happened to you?" She pointed to my black, greasy hands and the sleeve torn on the fender.

As I told her the story, her face clouded and her eyes wandered away from mine nervously. The blonde was staring intently at us; as our eyes met she turned away.

Rose pushed herself away from the counter and drew a cleaning rag from behind the bar. "No. I ain't seen a silver Cordoba." She shook her head, more to herself than to me. "After a while you don't even see 'em go by." Then she walked back to the grill.

She had wanted to talk, and then something had stopped her; I wanted to know what. I looked back at the blonde, but she was staring out at the empty highway.

"You got any kids?" I called down the counter.

She looked back at me, surprised. Suspicion hooded her eyes. The black leaned over the counter to fix me with his stare.

"Yeah. Two. Why?"

I smiled innocently. "Any boys?"

She scowled. "Yeah. Both of 'em. What you want to know for?"

I slid off the stool. "Warm this up for me," I said, pointing to the cup, "and I'll be back to show you." I had a baseball in the trunk of my car. An autographed baseball for her kids was just what I needed to loosen her up again.

Steam was rising from the cup when I returned; everybody in the place was watching me. I grinned a goofy grin I didn't feel and sat down. I pulled out a felt-tip and poised it over the ball. "What're their names? I'll autograph a ball for them," I said, laying on my deepest Okie accent.

It worked. She came over. "Eugene Junior and Walter. You a ballplayer?"

"A pitcher. Used to be," I said. Everyone went back to his own business. Ex-ballplayers are common in New Jersey. And Oklahoma. I signed the ball to Eugene Junior and Walter, with best regards.

She took the ball and read, then looked up at me. "Hey, I saw you pitch once, at Shea." I could predict the rest. 'Course, that was years ago. Eugene Senior took us to all the games. He was a Met fan," she explained, and pushed a strand of brown hair back under her crumpled paper tiara. I nodded. "But he died two years ago May. I still call the boy Junior; it keeps his father alive a little for him." She hadn't called him her husband, but the boy's father: what emptiness in that. Pain gathered in wrinkles around her eyes.

Suddenly I didn't want to ask her any more questions. I dropped a bill on the counter and stood up. "Well, they must be done with my car by now," I said. She looked disappointed.

Leaning over she slid the bill into her pocket and spoke low. "Coffee on me. And hey, about that Cordoba? Comes by here regular. But only in the

middle of the night." Then she stood up and started wiping the counter. "Thanks for the ball. See ya."

I waved to her and looked back at the blonde as I walked out the door. The moon was shining in through the wide window, its pale glow bleaching out the hollows of her cheeks and eyes. I had named her rightly—the Silver Lady. She wasn't looking at me, but she was watching me the way a good pitcher measures a base runner's lead without seeming to see him.

The next night I drove the Pike from the city down to the Delaware Memorial Bridge.

The storm system had cleared out but another one was trailing at its heels, about to hit. There was little traffic and the lane dividers flashed stroboscopically in the glare of my headlights. The sounds of night driving filled the car, WWVA strong and clear through the fading AM stations, succumbing only to static crashes. My body settled into the familiar rhythm, the growl of the tires on the road the velocity of my life.

We rolled through the night, accompanied by an occasional neighbor cruising past at his own rhythm, headlights flashing up and down. There was a blur as he passed, followed by the winking red tail-light which slid in front of me, then slowly pulled away, swallowed up by distance and darkness. The turnpike was quiet, the land passive; no silver Cordoba rushed at me.

At the final toll apron, I turned around and drove back north, toward New York. Time circled the night in harmony with the steady rumble of the tires and the measured flash of the lane dividers.

The road was completely empty except for us. Outside, the dark woods loomed over the roadway, barely distinguishable from the sooty sky. The Firebird rolled along, synchronized to the hiss and gurgle of my body's mechanics, synchronized to the rhythm of my lazy thoughts. As I passed the restaurant across the highway, I was sure I saw the silver Cordoba parked out front.

At the next exit, I rammed a five at the toll-keeper and drove past him, not waiting for my change. I circled the booth and drove through the entrance, ripping a ticket from the automatic dispenser and almost smashing through the slow-rising gate. As I careened across the on-ramp, I could see the astonished toll-keeper standing beside his booth, my change in his hands, staring after me.

The road felt unstable under my wheels, as though the asphalt had melted in the heat of my blood and was slipping under the weight of my rolling tires. At the same time the melted tar grabbed at the rubber, trying to keep me from the Cordoba. The steering wheel was mushy in my hands, and the engine's note was hoarse and irregular.

SCENICRUISER AND THE SILVER LADY

There were no cars parked in front of the restaurant when I got there. I banged into the room. Rose was behind the counter piling dirty dishes into a plastic tub. She looked up when I came in and poured a cup of coffee for me. She set it down in front of her.

"Was it here?" I said. My anger drained away before her.

She shook her head. "No, not tonight." Her eyes went to the highway. I slid onto the stool before her and picked up the steaming cup. "The boys really loved the baseball," she said.

I nodded and wondered why I was out there, chasing a strange car. "I thought I saw it parked out front before," I said. There was nothing else for me to do, and this was something worth doing. Who broke the highway motion? Who violated that utterly man-made rhythm? I had to know. And after years alone, sympathy for Rose...

"It's calm out there," she said.

"Yeah. But there's a storm growing, I can feel it."

In the background, the AM radio's tinny voice predicted thunderstorms along the southern coast of New Jersey and into Philadelphia. I had the feeling that I used to have in the middle of the eighth, when the hear of the lineup was due and the score was tied—like the chop in the air just before landing which throws a plane around. My stomach trembled.

"It's like the night Eugene died," she said. I turned around on the stool and watched the road with her. Maybe I didn't want to look into those empty eyes. They carried an implied appeal. We were both victims of the highways. Her rhythm was mine.

She was silent for a long time. The air conditioner pumped chilled Jersey air into the room, cool but wet, carrying the dead smell of the pine barrens past the refrigeration coils and the dust filters. "Night just like this," she repeated. "Hauling a load of chemical fertilizer. From upstate. Clear, but a storm front was comin' in from the Lakes. There was nobody on the road with him. Grade was smooth and the roadbed clear. The patrol told me he musta fallen asleep and missed the curve. He was gonna stop here and pick me up." She turned away from the window. I watched her face. "The stuff went up like gasoline." She sighed deep in her throat, where the tears could be cut off with a squeeze. "Burned for hours. Like

that plane that crashed." I could see the dead ashes of the truck in her eyes, a flat black which would not reflect light.

She turned her haunted eyes to me. "But he never took drugs, and was only on the road for six hours."

I shook my head sadly. At least I could take them to a game, Rose and her kids. Newborn thunder muttered against the glass panes.

The Silver Lady walked into the restaurant. She didn't seem surprised to see me. We nodded to her, Rose and I, as she walked over to her booth. Our conversation collapsed. The promise of lightning flickered behind the clouding sky.

Her hair was tousled by the wind, and the chains around her neck flashed in the fluorescent lights. Dark blood discolored the skin under her eyes. She had been out in the birthing of the storm, and it had left its mark on her. Rose went over to her with a menu and a pot of coffee. The Silver Lady took the coffee and waved the menu away. She stared out the window at the storm rolling down the highway.

It broke in waves of hard rain, and no sooner did it smack into the glass than the lights of the gas station next door were running across the slick asphalt. The rain beat against the roof of the restaurant and whipped the surrounding trees against the building. Water sheeted down the glass panes.

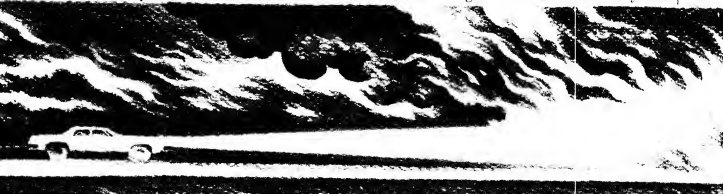
Bright yellow lights spilled across the road: the wrecker was pulling out. I walked over to the windows in time to see smeared red taillights pulling away. A police cruiser, dome lights flashing red, raced by on the highway, its banshee siren howling through the storm. Somewhere on the turnpike someone was dying.

It could have been me.

The Silver Lady turned from the window to look up at me. Her eyes were alive in the wild light. A smile played around her mouth and her nostrils flared with excitement. "Do you like the rain?" she said. Her voice was low, filled with whispers of the wind; it rustled in my ears, full of aching emptiness and time, full of loss and power.

I nodded.

"I love the storms," she said. "I love the way they sweep the highway." She cocked her head to the sound of something I could never hear. "They clean



the road."

I sipped lukewarm coffee. She pulled her white sweater closer around her shoulders and looked at me. "I don't think my ride is going to make it tonight. Would you mind dropping me home? I only live a short way from here. Normally I'd walk, but the storm..." She gestured at the window.

I usually don't pick up women along the road. But there was something compelling about her voice. I had to know her. Rose looked at me, sudden tears in her eyes.

I wanted to explain. It wasn't a fair comparison she thought I was making. This Silver Lady was raw energy, something elemental. My response was more complex than desire. I had no alternative but to respond, even against my will. "Hey, Rose," I said, taking out a dollar bill. "You off Sunday?"

She looked up, confused, and nodded once, quickly.

"There's a game at Shea Sunday. The Astros. Let's take your kids and go." I left before the surprise on her face could disperse to rejection.

We left the restaurant together, the Silver Lady and I, running through the rain to my car. She held her sweater over her head like a newspaper. The rain plastered her blouse against her loose breasts as I fumbled with the door lock. From behind the speckled window, Rose stared out at us.

The storm had transformed the highway. The landmarks I was familiar with were lost behind the windshield wipers and the heavy downpour. It was as though the night and the storm had sucked the illumination from the car's headlights.

I asked her her name, and where she lived. I asked her who she was waiting for. She leaned against me, her wet breast pressed against my side. The Silver Lady pointed down the road and said she had been waiting for me.

I started to ask her something else, but she put a hand behind my neck and kissed me, pulling my eyes away from the road.

That kiss burned like fire; it sent a thrill through me I hadn't felt in years. She nibbled on my lip and pressed her tongue deep into my mouth. The cool touch of her fingers was a narcotic in the night.

The car slewed on the slick asphalt; I pulled away from her and righted the skidding car. My breath came heavy, terror mixed with passion. I laughed shakily in the silence. Through the rest of the ride she sat beside me, her fingers laid lightly on my thigh, while I drove through the storm.

She pointed out an exit I hadn't noticed coming up. The storm, I thought. Then a tollbooth appeared at the end of the broad curve, and I was reassured. The Silver Lady directed me to a dark street right off the exit.

Her house was dark, in the middle of woods

which ran right up to the dirt road. I pulled into the driveway at her direction and bounced through a deep puddle, splashing mud over the hood and onto the windshield. As my headlights swept around, I caught a glimmer of chrome bumper on the car parked in front of her house.

Her hand on the door latch, she said, "Come on in," and ran from the Pontiac into her house. But first I had to check her car, so I ran around the front of the house in the driving rain. It was parked wrong-way on the side of the road, a Fairmont with a New Jersey plate nestled on its trunk.

She was waiting for me at the front door, a candle in her hand, smiling. "The power is off," she said. I grinned and stepped into the dry, cool house. It was old, a two-story house, the kind they don't build in modern suburbs. And then she was in my arms.

We were soaking wet, but the warmth of her body overwhelmed the drying chill. As soon as she was sure I was interested, she pulled away and handed me a towel. She took another one and ran it through her hair.

I hadn't expected any romance from her; I wasn't disappointed.

She said, "Why don't you take off those wet clothes?" and unfastened her skirt. It slid to the floor around her feet. The Silver Lady reached out and pulled me to her, then unbuttoned my shirt. She laughed at my heat. My hands reached for her and her laugh turned into a deep, long groan.

Her body was hard; her steel fingers dug into my buttocks as she banged against me, rhythm crossing rhythm. We heaved against each other, never synchronizing, like alien wave fronts beating against each other, building dissonances.

Her coming caught me by surprise; she crushed me to her and turned her face aside, spending herself in isolation from me. Possession was all, for her. She barely acknowledged my own release. While I slept she must have mounted me several times; I awoke beneath and within her, feeling years older, desire unimaginable.

Some mornings there is no sunrise. When I left the house it was still dark and still raining. I left knowing no more about her than her body. She was cold heat; she took and gave carelessly, exhaustion and release.

The Firebird wouldn't start. I sat behind the wheel in her driveway, cranking the engine until the battery died. Water must have soaked the wires. Around me the darkness was a shiny black carapace. She ran out to the car, a slicker held over her head, and stood at my window.

"Come on," she said, "I'll drive you to the stop on the Turnpike. You can get a mechanic back here to

start you." Cold. Like that. She didn't offer to let me stay out the storm. But then, I wouldn't have. She knew the signs, too.

I clambered out of the Firebird and followed her to her car. She leaned across the seat, unlocking the door for me. I slid into its black velvet cocoon.

The car was a silver Cordoba.

I should have known.

I wanted to get out; I wanted to walk in the rain to a paved road and pick up a ride, but I couldn't move. Her opium fingers held me in place effortlessly. Gravel crunched under the tires and the exhaust beat against my eardrums. Although she was invisible in the shadowed blackness of the car, I could feel and hear her.

She patted my cheek with a steely hand and smiled. "Don't you worry, dear," she said. "I know these roads well. They're old acquaintances."

Overhead the trees waved wildly in the storm, their branches knitting the form of the Silver Lady. She flickered into shape within the dark car at the command of the branches, a vicious siren with an appetite for carrion. I watched her take form before my eyes, heard the malevolent moaning of the trees as they breathed the illusion of life into her.

Lightning flickered, and in its blue flashes I saw her fairly for the first time. Her limbs were gnarled, her joints polished mahogany. The fingers which gripped the steering wheel were chocking vines; her silver clothes were ancient gauze stained here and there with the sienna of old blood. Her breathing was the cold rustle of dead leaves blown before a storm, and the light in her eyes was the false passion of November moonlight.

Her pale face was worn concrete, crumbling under the sun, her eyes the mud color of oil-stained gravel. Black grease formed crescent moons under the fingernails which clenched my arm. This animate marionette was the Silver Lady.

I knew her at that moment. She saw it and turned away, unable to bear the recognition in my eyes. But I had succeeded in seeing what she was, had discovered the unconscious of that land and that highway.

I screamed soundlessly in the car. Her morpheus grin spread; the woods outside suckled on my terror.

I didn't see much of that ride, and what I did see I'll try to forget for the rest of my life, though that is impossible.

She drove like a madwoman, taking curves at the limit of the tires' ability to hold the road, and beyond, into sickening, oscillating skids. The engine roared a constant moaning protest as she attacked the roadway with her car. She drove to a different access than the one we had come through before. The

automatic ticket gate was open and she sped through, slewing slightly over the steel plate beneath the dispenser. Rain beat against the highway with its palms.

As she raced down the on-ramp, I saw my blue Firebird rolling along smoothly in the right lane, glistening in the rain. The Silver Lady grinned a deadly grin as she accelerated to cut me off.

The Firebird saw us coming and slid into the left lane, giving us room to enter. She laughed at the courtesy, knowing my heart. The storm and the night were in that laugh; the angry wind through the violated land was in her throat.

She slewed the Cordoba onto the Turnpike, crossing the right lane in a flash. There was a moment of glaring lights and screaming tires. The wet road bled light in my eyes. I tried to pull the steering wheel away from her, but she held it in a death-grip. It was like trying to drag a marble block across a beach. I dug my heels in against the transmission hump and pulled at the wheel until I thought the muscles in my arms would burst. But I moved it.

There was a screech of flayed metal behind us as the Firebird ran against the concrete center divider, sparks spraying off its mangled fender. In the rearview mirror I saw it come to a stop, one headlight following us down the highway, the other crumpled within the fender, its beam pointing up into the night sky.

The Silver Lady chuckled deep in her throat as we drove away. She leaned over and touched me on the neck. "So you really don't want to stay with me, do you?" She shook her platinum hair, bemused.

Then I remember the car entering a long, gentle curve. I remember the tractor rig climbing slowly to top gear; I glimpsed the flammable warning diamonds on its rear doors, under the neat lettering, "Winston and Sons." At the heart of the curve, the Cordoba leapt from hiding behind it and cut in front of the semi's huge front grill. The driver stared down at us with terrified eyes and yanked his wheel frantically to avoid smashing into the flank of the Cordoba. Painted under the open window was the name *Eugene*.

The cab hit the curb, bounced up once like a toy, and broke its spine. The trailer behind slammed through the back of the cab, igniting the fuel tanks slung low beneath it. The cab blew apart in a bright orange ball. Eugene blew away.

But that wasn't enough for her. She had to show me how completely she hated us, and how powerful she was. As we screamed away, the fertilizer exploded with a muffled *crump*. The explosion towered up to the clouds, casting its blood-black glare across the Turnpike. The blasted corpse of the trailer shriveled in the fire.

She slowed the car and stopped at the side of the road in the darkness, past sight of the pyre. She

The trailer slammed through the back of the cab, which blew apart in a bright orange ball. But that wasn't enough for her. She had to show me how completely she hated us...

leaned across me and pushed my door open. The sounds of the night spilled in, the hiss of rain on the asphalt, the rustle of leaves swaying in the wind. A long sigh, hollow and dank, pushed me from the car. I stumbled to my knees on the wet road and looked up to see the taillights of the Cordoba disappearing down the slick highway. Far away, sirens wailed.

I walked in the diminishing rain for miles; overhead the hostile boughs whipped by my head, spattering me with water. A state patrol car raced by on the other side of the road. Its siren pierced my skull, an amalgam of all the death-screams ever heard on that highway. Shortly afterwards, a wrecker rolled by, its orange dome light flickering steadily. Without benefit of a siren, it seemed to growl past slowly.

I was thoroughly soaked and chilled by the time I arrived at the rest stop. The parking lot was empty and the rain was only a sprinkle against the heavy wet cotton of my shirt. There were five people in the restaurant: two kids hunched over cups of coffee in a back booth, the black behind the grill, Rose—and the Silver Lady. As I approached, I saw her studying the truckers. She spread the hypodermic kit out on the table before her while seeming to measure the lives of the kids.

Then she looked out and saw me. And smiled. I began to shake with terror. But before I could reach the doors to the restaurant, I saw myself walk into the room, shirt cuff torn, hands grimy.

The Silver Lady had trapped me. Diana, too, had taken revenge for the stolen vision of her nakedness.

I pounded on the window, but nobody heard me. I screamed to Rose, but she was busy leaning over the counter talking to me. Finally, I just watched as the past replayed itself. The Silver Lady

watched me clinically, harvesting her voyeur's pleasures.

O Rose, I have never wanted anything more than to take you to a ball game. The chill of the rain soaked deeper into me.

I turned around, not knowing what to do, needing to look away from my past and find shelter. My Firebird was parked in front of the restaurant. I hadn't heard it pull up.

But then, it shouldn't have been there.

I should have taken the job in Oneonta. I should have stayed with the game and never have gotten involved with highways and the rhythm of the tires, and with the Silver Lady. Rose leaned her elbows heavily on the counter, fist to cheek, staring through the windows at the highway, doubly cursed by the Silver Lady. She was trapped on it, too.

The engine turned over easily; it was still warm from recent driving. The heater was a blessing against the wet cold as I turned around and headed out onto the Turnpike. The ride to the next exit was long, but the storm had stuttered to a rest and the signs glowed brilliantly in the wet.

The exit rolled gently to the west toward a tollbooth. I paid the toll and turned around. I entered the highway heading north, back to New York.

The automatic gate was open. The storm had probably shorted out the mechanism; I would explain it to the toll-keeper when I got off. I'd be happy to pay the toll for the whole length of the road. As I rolled through onto the on-ramp, I heard a mechanical clatter from the gate, something like the laugh of the Silver Lady.

If I'd stayed off the Turnpike and driven home along back country roads, I might have made it. But on the highway I was in her hands. Maybe nothing would have helped me; probably nothing would have saved me.

Exits flashed past as I rolled along the highway once more, almost reassured by the steady rhythm of the car. Just before the exit for Outerbridge Crossing, I ran into the storm again. It was a reminder of the Silver Lady.

I turned off at the exit, headed for Perth Amboy and Staten Island. I followed the signs toward New Jersey 440 as long as I could see them in the rain, but the toll booth never materialized. Soon I was reduced to following the yellow side marker painted along the edge of the roadway.

The next thing I knew, the Silver Cordoba was flashing through the rain toward me. I scuttled over to the left lane, knowing what was going to happen. After toying with me, taunting me with freedom, she was going to kill me, almost within sight of home.

And it happened all over again. The attacking car, the lovers wrestling within, the bang and screech of steel on concrete, the burning rubber of the raped

SCENICRUISER AND THE SILVER LADY

tire. Only this time I noticed my door handle shear off against the divider and clink down the roadway.

That's when I started to cry. That clink was the laugh of the Silver Lady.

Something inside me let go: my rhythm.

I didn't bother to stop; I wrenched the Firebird away from the divider and took off after the Cordoba. Blood rage was in my veins.

Her taillights disappeared around a curve. I chased her, opening the Firebird up all the way. The tires slid on the wet pavement, the car slued on the oily asphalt, but I hung onto the wheel and steered through it. Dimly behind the sheeting rain I saw a sign for the exit to Bordentown and Fort Dix.

I was back, somehow—back on the Jersey Turnpike.

I wasn't surprised. She would never let me leave. No matter what exit I took, I would be driving onto the Turnpike headed south. The only way I could have been free was to kill her if I could.

I had to; I had to take Rose to the ball game.

Her taillights were reddening in the distance. The Firebird leapt forward again as I passed the exit; the Silver Lady's metallic laugh was in my ears as the wind howled through the trees.

There were no other cars on the highway, just me and the Silver Lady. I chased her for miles, following her alien driving rhythm, screaming my hatred and defiance at her the whole time. The darkness was static; day ceased to exist. There were only the Silver Lady and me, the highway, the trees, and the storm.

I topped a rise and there it was. The Cordoba was picking its way slowly through the storm in the right-hand lane, cruising for another victim. She'd assumed I was lost and wandering, I told myself.

I turned my headlights off and crept up on her. Even without lights I could see the mocking sticker pasted where a license plate belonged. I coughed my laughter into the night.

In an instant I pulled out beside her and turned on my high beams. Then I cut the wheel sharply to the right, smashing the Firebird against the front wheel of the Cordoba. It dipped and twisted toward me. Then it flipped. God, it flipped.

The trunk reared up slowly; the car rolled over onto the front left fender, which skidded backwards. The whole car pinwheeled, landing on the corner of the rear bumper. That ignited the gas tank and the car wrenched away in agony, a rolling ball of fire.

I pulled off to the side of the road ahead and leaned against the wheel, shaking, drained of all strength. When I could, I backed up to the burning torch of a car. The rain had slowed to a steady drizzle.

I swear that I had the Cordoba in sight clearly the whole time. There had been no other car on the

road. I saw the "I♥NY" not ten feet from me.

What was burning beside the road was '62 Chevy, white, pitted with rust around the wheel wells. It wasn't the Cordoba. The car lay crumpled in the midst of the fire like a dead spider curled in on itself. Part of a corpse lay smeared on the asphalt in the pool of my headlights.

As the car burned, the metal gave off little screams of expansion. In the echo of the melted metal I could hear the laughter of the Silver Lady.

I drove away after her. Somewhere ahead of me she was waiting to kill. Trapped on the highway, I had no choice. I could only be free by killing her.

But in trying I had come to serve her after all.

When I killed that first car, my rhythm was no longer mine, it was hers. All that I had, my rhythm, and all that I might have had with Rose, she had taken. The Firebird no longer responded to my control.

The car drove a long time, heedless of my attempts to stop it, before I saw any hint in the intensified rain. Then a state trooper roared past across the highway, dome lights flashing, siren howling agony through the night. Behind it in the distance I could see the revolving orange light of a wrecker.

The car drove me along the highway, rain pounding on the roof, rain bouncing off the hood, heater blasting through the vents. As the Firebird drove past the restaurant, I could see two figures inside: Rose behind the counter with her sore feet, her two kids, and her dead, searching eyes. Twice the highway had held out freedom to her, and twice it had pulled it from her closing grasp.

And the Silver Lady.

I had to stop, to reach out to Rose and take her from behind the counter into the bright sunlight and the cheering crowds, those crowds and that light I had always been too busy to enjoy, caught up in my own rhythm. But the Firebird drove on, heedless of my desires.

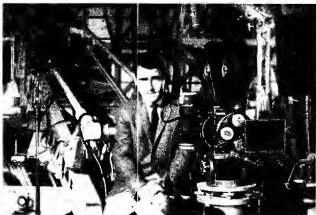
It is always the middle of the night, the heart of a storm. Every time I see the Cordoba the wheels of the Firebird turn of their own accord into it; the engine accelerates in a rage toward the flickering silver car, though I press against the useless brake with both feet, though I wrench at the immobile wheel.

It is never the Cordoba which burns at the side of the road.

I have become her lover after all; the Silver Lady has no need to drive the highway anymore. I cruise alone in the night, caught in her rhythm, and the sirens follow my route collecting the dead. I cruise alone searching for grace, seeking out death. They wait for me in that restaurant alongside the Turnpike. 17

TV's Twilight Zone: Part Three

CONTINUING MARC SCOTT ZICREE'S
SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE TO THE ENTIRE
TWILIGHT ZONE TELEVISION SERIES,
COMPLETE WITH ROD SERLING'S OPENING
AND CLOSING NARRATIONS



"There is a fifth dimension, beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. It is an area which we call The Twilight Zone."



26. EXECUTION

Written by Rod Serling
Based on an unpublished story by
George Clayton Johnson
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: David Orrick McDearmon
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
No music credit

Cast
Joe Caswell: Albert Salmi
George Manion: Russell Johnson
Johnson: Than Wyenn
Reverend: Jon Lormer
Judge: Fay Roope
Elderly Man: George Mitchell
Bartender: Richard Karlan
Cowboy: Joe Haworth

"Commonplace if somewhat grim unsocial even known as a necktie party, the guest of dishonor a cowboy named Joe Caswell, just a moment away from a rope, a short dance several feet off the ground, and then the dark eternity of all evil men. Mr. Joe Caswell, who, when the good Lord passed out a conscience, a heart, a feeling for fellow men, must have been out for a beer and missed out. Mr. Joe Caswell, in the last quiet moment of a violent life."

In 1880, Joe Caswell is about to be hanged for shooting a man in the back. But as the noose tightens around his neck, Caswell disappears—and reappears in the modern laboratory of Professor Manion, inventor of the time machine that has saved his neck. Manion's machine plucked Caswell at random out of the past. Seeing the rope burns and surmising that Caswell is one of life's dangerous people, Manion attempts to send him back. The two

men struggle. Caswell hits Manion over the head and runs out onto a busy city street. Overwhelmed by the lights and the noise, Caswell returns to the laboratory to seek Manion's aid, but his blow has killed the scientist. Then Paul Johnson, a petty thief, enters the lab. Caswell grapples with him for his gun. Johnson strangles Caswell with the draw-cord of a curtain. But in looking for a hidden safe, Johnson unwittingly activates the time machine. He is sent back to 1880, appearing in the noose meant for Caswell and meeting the fate intended for the other man.

"This is November, 1880, the aftermath of a necktie party. The victim's name—Paul Johnson, a minor-league criminal and the taker of another human life. No comment on his death save this: justice can span years. Retribution is not subject to a calendar. Tonight's case in point in the Twilight Zone."



27. THE BIG TALL WISH

Written by Rod Serling
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: Ron Winston
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
Music: Jerry Goldsmith
Cast

Bolie Jackson: Ivan Dixon
Henry: Steven Perry
Frances: Kim Hamilton
Mizell: Walter Burke
Thomas: Henry Scott
Other Fighter: Charles Horvath
Announcer: Carl McIntire
Referee: Frankie Van

"In this corner of the universe, a prizefighter named Bolie Jackson, 183 pounds and an hour and a half from a comeback at St. Nick's arena. Mr. Bolie Jackson, who by the standards of his profession is an aging, over-the-hill relic of what was, and who now sees the reflection of a man who has left too many pieces of his youth in too many stadiums for too many years before too many screaming people. Mr. Bolie Jackson, who might do well to look for some gentle magic in the hard-surfaced glass that stares back at him."

Although Jackson breaks his hand prior to the fight, he wins it because Henry—a little boy who adores the fighter and who believes utterly in magic—has made the "big, tall wish." Unfortunately, after the fight the boxer refuses to believe in the magic, insisting it was his own ability that won the match. In anguish, the child tells him, "If you don't believe, it won't be true!" But the fighter has been battered and beaten for so long that he

can't believe. Suddenly, Jackson finds himself back in the ring, flat on his back and counted out. When he returns to Henry, the child tells him that he won't be making any more wishes. "I'm too old for wishes," he says, "and there ain't no such thing as magic, is there?" "Maybe there is magic," says Bolie. "Maybe there's wishes, too. I guess the trouble is, there's not enough people around to believe."

"Mr. Bolie Jackson, 183 pounds, who left a second chair lying in a heap on a rosin-spattered canvas at St. Nick's arena. Mr. Bolie Jackson, who shares the most common ailment of all men, the strange and perverse disinclination to believe in a miracle, the kind of miracle to come from a little boy, perhaps only to be found in the Twilight Zone."



28. A NICE PLACE TO VISIT

Written by Charles Beaumont
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: John Brahm
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
No music credit
Cast

Rocky Valentine: Larry Blyden
Mr. Pip: Sebastian Cabot
Policeman: John Close
Croupier: Wayne Tucker
First Beautiful Girl: Sandra Warner
Dancing Girl: Barbara English
Craps Dealer: Peter Hornsby
Midget Policeman: Nels Nelson
Parking Attendant: Bill Mullikin

"Portrait of a man at work, the only work he's ever done, the only work he knows. His name is Henry Francis Valentine, but he calls himself Rocky, because that's the way his life has been—rocky and perilous and uphill at a dead run all the way. He's tired now, tired of running or wanting, of waiting for the breaks that come to others but never to him, never to Rocky Valentine... A scared, angry little man. He thinks it's all over now, but he's wrong. For Rocky Valentine, it's just the beginning."

After being shot to death by a policeman, petty thief Rocky Valentine revives to find himself unhurt—and in the company of a seemingly good-natured, white-haired fat man named Pip. Pip explains that he is Valentine's "guide" and that he has been instructed to supply him with whatever he wishes. At first, Valentine is suspicious—to the point of shooting Pip point-blank in the head. But when he isn't harmed at all by this, Rocky

concludes that Pip must be his guardian angel, and he must be in Heaven! Accordingly, he goes on a good-time spree filled with gambling and beautiful women. The only problem is that everything is too good: Rocky wins at every game, and any woman he wants is his for the asking. All of this very quickly becomes stifling. Rocky pleads with Pip to be sent to "the Other Place." With a gleeful ferocity, Pip replies, "This is the Other Place!"

"A scared, angry little man who never got a break. Now he has everything he's ever wanted—and he's going to have to live with it for eternity... in the Twilight Zone."



29. NIGHTMARE AS A CHILD

Written by Rod Serling
 Producer: Buck Houghton
 Director: Alvin Ganzer
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
 Music: Jerry Goldsmith
 Cast

Helen Foley: Janice Rule
 Markie: Terry Burnham
 Peter Selden: Shepperd Strudwick
 Doctor: Michael Fox
 Police Lt.: Joe Perry
 Little Girl: Suzanne Cupit

"Month of November, hot chocolate, and a small cameo of a child's face, imperfect only in its solemnity. And these are the improbable ingredients to a human emotion, an emotion, say, like—fear. But in a moment this woman, Helen Foley, will realize fear. She will understand what are the properties of terror. A little girl will lead her by the hand and walk with her into a nightmare."

Markie, a strangely serious child is sitting on the stairs outside Helen's apartment. Helen invites Markie in for a cup of hot chocolate. The child seems to know her—and jogs Helen's memory about a man she saw earlier that day. This does not seem important until the same man arrives at Helen's door. Frightened, Markie runs out the back way. The man is Peter Selden, who worked for Helen's mother when Helen was a child and who claims to be the first to find her mother's body after she was murdered—an event Helen witnessed but has blocked from her

conscious mind. When she mentions Markie, Selden comments that this was Helen's nickname as a child and shows her an old photo of herself. Helen sees that she and Markie are one and the same! After Selden leaves, Markie reappears. She has come for a reason: to force Helen to remember her mother's death. Just then, Selden returns. He confesses to the murder and explains that he has tracked Helen down in order to get rid of the sole witness to his crime. He lunges at her, but she manages to get out to the hallway and push him down the stairs—to his death. Thanks to the intervention of Markie—who represents the part of Helen that remembers trying desperately to save her mother—Helen survives.

"Miss Helen Foley, who has lived in night and who will wake up to morning. Miss Helen Foley, who took a dark spot from the tapestry of her life and rubbed it clean—then stepped back a few paces and got a good look at the Twilight Zone."



30. A STOP AT WILLOUGHBY

Written by Rod Serling
 Producer: Buck Houghton
 Director: Robert Parrish
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
 Music: Nathan Scott
 Cast

Gert Williams: James Daly
 Jane Williams: Patricia Donahue
 Mr. Misrell: Howard Smith
 Conductor #1: Jason Wingreen
 Conductor #2: James Maloney
 Helen: Mavis Neal
 Boy One: Billy Booth
 Boy Two: Butch Hengen
 Trainman: Ryan Hayes
 Man on Wagon: Max Slaten

"This is Gert Williams, age thirty-eight, a man protected by a suit of armor all held together by one bolt. Just a moment ago, someone removed the bolt, and Mr. Williams' protection fell away from him and left him a naked target. He's been canonized this afternoon by all the enemies of his life. His insecurity has shelled him, his sensitivity has straddled him with humiliation, his deep-rooted disgust about his own worth has zerved in on him, landed on target, and blown him apart. Mr. Gert Williams, ad agency exec, who in just a moment will move into the Twilight Zone—in a desperate search for survival."

During a meeting, Williams' boss savagely dresses him down for losing an important account. While riding home on the train, Williams dreams he is on a very different train in July of 1880, entering a restful little town named Willoughby, a place "where a man can slow down to a walk and live his life full measure." He realizes that he isn't made for the competitive life,

that Willoughby is where he belongs. But when he tries to explain this to his wife, she ridicules him. Ultimately, the pressure of his job causes Williams to crack. He phones his wife to tell her that he's quitting and to beg her to wait at home for him, but she hangs up. On the trip home, Williams finds himself back in Willoughby, where the townfolk greet him warmly by name. He's home to stay. Meanwhile, the commuter train has come to a full stop. It seems that Mr. Williams has jumped to his death. The body is loaded into a hearse. The sign on the back—Willoughby Funeral Home.

"Willoughby! Maybe it's wishful thinking nestled in a hidden part of a man's mind, or maybe it's the last stop in the vast design of things—or perhaps, for a man like Gert Williams, who climbed on a world that went by too fast, it's a place around the bend where he could jump off. Willoughby! Whatever it is, it comes with sunlight and serenity, and is a part of the Twilight Zone."



31. THE CHASER

Written by Robert Presnell, Jr.
Based on the story by John Collier
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: Douglas Heyes
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
No music credit
Cast

Roger Shackelforth: George Grizzard
Prof. Daemon: John McIntire
Leila: Patricia Barry
Homburg: J. Pat O'Malley
Blonde: Barbara Perry
Fat Lady: Marjorie Bennett
Bartender: Duane Grey
Tall Man: Rusty Wescoatt

"Mr. Roger Shackelforth. Age: youthful twenties. Occupation: being in love. Not just in love, but madly, passionately, illogically, miserably, all-consumingly in love — with a young woman named Leila who has a vague recollection of his face and even less than a passing interest. In a moment you'll see a switch, because Mr. Roger Shackelforth, the young gentleman so much in love, will take a short but meaningful journey into the Twilight Zone."

Desperate for Leila's affection, Roger obtains a love potion from an enigmatic professor named A. Daemon. Visiting Leila's apartment, he manages to slip her the potion in a glass of champagne. It works like a charm — but too well. After six months of marriage, Roger is so sick of Leila's nauseating utter devotion that he returns to the professor and for a thousand dollars buys his guaranteed "glove cleaner" ("no trace, no odor, no taste, no way to detect its presence — and it's sure"). At

first, he is determined, as before, to slip her the liquid in a glass of champagne, but upon hearing that she is expecting a baby, his shock is so great that he drops the glass. Outside on the patio, Professor Daemon reclines on a deck chair, smoking a cigar. He blows a heart-shaped smoke ring and disappears.

"Mr. Roger Shackelforth, who has discovered at this late date that love can be as sticky as a vat of molasses, as unpalatable as a hunk of spoiled yeast, and as all-consuming as a six-alarm fire in a bamboo and canvas tent. Case history of a lover boy who should never have entered the Twilight Zone."



32. A PASSAGE FOR TRUMPET

Written by Rod Serling
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: Don Medford
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
Music: Lyn Murray
Cast

Joey Crown: Jack Klugman
Gabe: John Anderson
Nan: Mary Webster
Baron: Frank Wolff
Truck Driver: James Flavin
Pawnshop Owner: Ned Glass
Woman Pedestrian: Diane Honodel

"Joey Crown, musician with an odd, intense face, whose life is a quest for impossible things like flowers in concrete or like trying to pluck a note of music out of the air and put it under glass to treasure . . . Joey Crown, musician with an odd, intense face, who in a moment will try to leave the Earth and discover the middle ground — the place we call the Twilight Zone."

Convinced that he'll never amount to anything — even not ever to have a girlfriend — Joey has taken to the bottle, with the result that he can't get a job anywhere. Deciding to commit suicide, he throws himself in front of a truck. When he regains consciousness, he finds himself alone on the street at night. Visiting several of his regular haunts, he is unable to locate anybody he knows, and the people who are there can neither see nor hear him. When he notices that he casts no reflection in a mirror, Joey concludes that he must be a ghost. Reflecting

back on his life, he realizes that it was actually filled with a number of small joys. Drawn by the sound of a trumpet being played, Joey meets a tall, elegant man in a tuxedo who, surprisingly, can see and hear him — and knows his name. The man tells him that it is the other people who are dead, that Joey is in limbo, between life and death; the choice of which way to go is his. Joey opts for life. As the man departs, Joey asks his name. The answer: "Gabriel." Joey finds himself back on the pavement, an instant after being hit by the truck, alive and unharmed. That night, while playing trumpet on a rooftop, he meets Nan, a newcomer to the city, who shyly asks if Joey could show her the sights. Enthusiastically, he accepts the offer.

"Joey Crown, who makes music, and who discovered something about life: that it can be rich and rewarding and full of beauty, just like the music he plays, if a person could only pause to look and to listen. Joey Crown, who got his clue in the Twilight Zone."



33. MR. BEVIS

Written by Rod Serling
 Producer: Buck Houghton
 Director: William Asher
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
 No music credit

Cast
 James B. W. Bevis: Orson Bean
 J. Hardy Hempstead: Henry Jones
 Mr. Peckinpaugh: Charles Lane
 Policeman: William Schallert
 2nd Policeman: House Peters, Jr.
 Young Lady: Colleen O'Sullivan
 Bartender: Horace McMahon
 Margaret: Florence Mac Michael
 Landlady: Dorothy Neuman
 Peddler: Vito Scotti
 Little Boy: Timmy Cleto

"In the parlance of the twentieth century, this is an oddball. His name is James B. W. Bevis, and his tastes lean toward stuffed animals, zither music, professional football, Charles Dickens, moose heads, carnivals, dogs, children, and young ladies. Mr. Bevis is accident-prone, a little vague, a little discombobulated, with a life that possesses all the security of a floating crap game. But this can be said of our Mr. Bevis: without him, without his warmth, without his kindness, the world would be a considerably poorer place, albeit perhaps a little savor. . . . Should it not be too obvious by now, James B. W. Bevis is a fixture in his own private, optimistic, hopeful little world, a world which has long ceased being surprised by him. . . . James B. W. Bevis, on whom Dame Fortune will shortly turn her back, but not before she gives him a paste in the mouth. Mr. James B. W. Bevis, just a block away from the Twilight Zone."

After losing his job, wrecking his car,

and being evicted from his apartment, Bevis meets his guardian angel, J. Hardy Hempstead. Hempstead arranges for Bevis to start the day over — but this time, Bevis is a success in his job, his rent is paid in advance, and instead of driving an old jalopy, he has a flashy sportscar. In order to have a new life, however, there must be a new Bevis. He can no longer be the well-liked neighborhood oddball. Bevis asks to be returned to the way he was before — broke, jobless, and with no place to live. Hempstead complies, but he arranges for Bevis's jalopy to be given back undamaged. He is still Bevis's guardian angel, and will continue to help him in small ways.

"Mr. James B. W. Bevis, who believes in a magic all his own. The magic of a child's smile, the magic of liking and being liked, the strange and wondrous mysticism that is the simple act of living. Mr. James B. W. Bevis, species of twentieth-century male, who has his own private and special Twilight Zone."



34. THE AFTER HOURS

Written by Rod Serling
 Producer: Buck Houghton
 Director: Douglas Heyes
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
 No music credit
 Makeup by William Tuttle
Cast

Marsha White: Anne Francis
 Saleswoman: Elizabeth Allen
 Armbruster: James Millhollin
 Elevator Operator: John Conwell
 Miss Pettigrew: Nancy Fennick
 Sloan: Patrick Whyte

"Express elevator to the ninth floor of a department store, carrying Miss Marsha White on a most prosaic, ordinary, run-of-the-mill errand. . . . Miss Marsha White on the ninth floor, Specialty Department, looking for a gold thimble. The odds are that she'll find it — but there are even better odds that she'll find something else, because this isn't just a department store. This happens to be the Twilight Zone."

Marsha finds the ninth floor to be a disturbingly barren place where the only piece of merchandise is a single gold thimble. This is sold to her by an overly familiar, strangely insolent saleslady. In the elevator, Marsha notices that the thimble is scratched. When she goes to complain she's told that there is no ninth floor. Spotting the salesgirl, Marsha points her out — and is horrified to see that the figure is a mannequin! Shaken, she is assisted by store personnel to an inner office where she falls asleep. When she awakes, she finds the store closed. As

she wanders in the dark, she hears voices which seem to come from the mannequins. Terrified, she backs into an elevator — which takes her to the ninth floor. The mannequins are there, and one by one they come to life, including the saleslady and the elevator operator who originally conducted her to the ninth floor. Soon Marsha remembers that she too is a mannequin, on her month's vacation among the humans. She had forgotten her true identity and failed to return on time. With melancholy resignation, Marsha apologizes, then reverts to her original — and inanimate — form.

"Marsha White in her normal and natural state: a wooden lady with a painted face who, one month out of the year, takes on the characteristics of someone as normal and as flesh and blood as you and I. But it makes you wonder, doesn't it? Just how normal are we? Just who are the people we nod our hellos to as we pass on the street? A rather good question to ask — particularly in the Twilight Zone."



35. THE MIGHTY CASEY

Written by Rod Serling
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: Robert Parrish and Alvin Ganzer
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
No music credit
Cast

Mouth McGarry: Jack Warden
Casey: Robert Sorrells
Dr. Stillman: Abraham Sofaer
Monk: Don O'Kelly
Doctor: Jonathan Hole
Beasley: Alan Dexter
Commissioner: Rusty Lane

"What you're looking at is a ghost, once alive but now deceased. Once upon a time, it was a baseball stadium that housed a major-league ball club known as the Hoboken Zephyrs. Now it houses nothing but memories and a wind that stirs in the high grass of what was once an outfield, a wind that sometimes bears a faint, ghostly resemblance to the roar of a crowd that once sat here. We're back in time now, when the Hoboken Zephyrs were still a part of the National League and this mausoleum of memories was an honest-to-Pete stadium. But since this is strictly a story of make-believe, it has to start this way: Once upon a time, in Hoboken, New Jersey, it was tryout day. And though he's not yet on the field, you're about to meet a most unusual fella, a left-handed pitcher named Casey."

To try out Casey, his human-looking robot, Dr. Stillman gets Mouth McGarry, manager of the broken-down Zephyrs, to sign him on as pitcher. Thanks to Casey, the team prospers. But a doctor discovers Casey has no

heart. Baseball rules require nine men on a team; without a heart, Casey's no man and is not allowed to play. Stillman makes him one, but now Casey won't strike out other players. The Zephyrs lose the pennant; Casey is washed up. But Stillman gives McGarry his blueprints. McGarry has a sudden inspiration — and chases Stillman . . .

"Once upon a time, here was a major league baseball team called the Hoboken Zephyrs who, during the last year of their existence, wound up in last place and shortly thereafter wound up in oblivion. The year's rumor, unsubstantiated of course, that a manager named McGarry took them to the West Coast and wound up with several pennants as a couple of world's champions. This team had a pitching staff that made history. Of course, none of them smiled very much, but it happens to be a fact that they pitched like nothing human. And if you're interested in where these gentlemen came from, you might check under 'B' for 'baseball' in the Twilight Zone."



36. A WOMAN OF HIS OWN

Written by Richard Matheson
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: Ralph Nelson
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
No music credit
Cast

Gregory West: George Wythe
Victoria West: Phyllis Kirk
Mary: Mary Lu Roche

"The house of Mr. Gregory West, one of America's most noted playwrights. The office of Mr. Gregory West, Mr. Gregory West — shy, quiet, and at the moment very happy. Mary — warm, affectionate . . . and the first introduction — Mrs. Gregory West."

Victoria West is surprised when she looks in the window of her husband's study and sees him sharing a drink with Mary, an attractive blonde. But she's even more surprised when she barges in a moment later and finds the woman gone without a trace. Gregory explains that simply by describing something — or somebody — into his dictating machine, he can cause it to materialize in his office. To make it disappear, all he need do is throw the tape in the fireplace. He demonstrates both these actions, first with Mary, and then — when Victoria attempts to run off — with a full-grown elephant in the hallway. Despite the evidence of her own senses, Victoria informs Gregory that she is convinced he is insane and

that she intends to leave him committed. In reply, Gregory removes an envelope from the wall safe. He tells her it contains the length of tape on which she is described. Believing none of this, Victoria snatches the envelope away from him and throws it on the fire. She has just enough time to register astonishment before she disappears. Gregory rushes to the tape machine and frantically begins to describe Victoria. . . . then reconsiders and describes instead Mrs. Mary West. The loving — and far less temperamental — Mary appears, contentedly taking her husband a drink. A final fillip is added as Rod Serling comes on the scene to caution viewers against taking any of this too seriously. Insulted, Gregory pulls out an envelope marked "Rod Serling." He removes a length of tape which he throws on the fire. Serling vanishes.

"Leaving Mr. Gregory West, still shy, quiet, very happy — and apparently in complete control of the Twilight Zone."



The After Hours

THE ORIGINAL
TELEVISION SCRIPT
FIRST AIRED ON CBS-TV
JUNE 10, 1960

by Rod Serling

T Z C L A S S I C T E L E P L A Y

1. SHOT (ART) OF AN ODD-LOOKING SKY

With strange clouds that drift across the sky. PAN DOWN for LONG ANGLE SHOT of a road that stretches out across a barren landscape punctuated by odd rock croppings and an occasional gnarled-branched tree. The CAMERA STARTS MOVING DOWN this road at a fast clip heading toward a far-out horizon. Over this we hear a Narrator's Voice.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

This highway leads to the shadowy tip of reality, a through-route to the land of the different, the bizarre, the unexplainable.

(a pause)

You go as far as you like on this road. Its limits are only those of the mind itself. Ladies and gentlemen, you're entering the wondrous dimension of imagination. Next stop—

At this moment we've reached the end of the road and are just a moment away from what appears to be a precipice leading out into nothingness. Concurrent with the next line of narration, the lettering springs up in front of the camera almost as if on a hinge.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

The Twilight Zone!

The CAMERA MOVES through into the lettering, smashing it into bits and then continuing on through until we are suspended in night sky. A SLOW PAN DOWN to opening shot of the play.

2. INT. DEPARTMENT STORE MAIN FLOOR DAY LONG ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN

At a humdrum of activity. Customers going to and fro. The occasional gong, gong, gong of a floorwalkers' signal. The constant opening and shutting of elevator doors, etc. CAMERA PANS

DOWN SLOWLY until it is eye level with the customers who move toward the elevators and the others that come out from behind it, moving away from it. PAN LEFT for MED. LONG SHOT of Marsha White as she stops hesitantly in front of the tier of elevators, finding them all closed.

3. MED. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

As she looks down the line of elevators.

4. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD LAST ELEVATOR ON LEFT

Its door just opening as she looks at it. A young operator sticks his head out, beckons to her.

OPERATOR

Going up, ma'am.

5. TRACK SHOT MARSHA

As she approaches the elevator and then steps inside.

MARSHA

Housewares?

OPERATOR

That would be mezzanine, ma'am. What in particular were you looking for?

MARSHA

Thimbles. Gold thimbles. You had them advertised.

OPERATOR

That would be Specialties, ma'am. Ninth floor.

**6. DIFFERENT ANGLE
MARSHA**

As seen from outside looking in toward elevator. The operator's hand raises preparatory to closing the door.

**7. REVERSE ANGLE
LOOKING OUTSIDE-FROM
ELEVATOR MARSHA'S
POV.**

There are long lines of people gathered, waiting for the elevators, but none of them even come close to the one she's in.

**8. REVERSE ANGLE
LOOKING TOWARD HER**

As she looks puzzled for a moment, a look that is shut off by the closing doors.

**9. INT. ELEVATOR TWO
SHOT MARSHA AND
OPERATOR**

She studies the back of his head as the elevator goes up slowly and almost noiselessly.

MARSHA

(smilingly)

I'm not accustomed to such service.

OPERATOR

(without turning around)

Ma'am?

MARSHA

(still lightly)

There were a lot of people waiting for elevators. I seem to have a private one.

OPERATOR

(now turns to her)

This is the express, ma'am, to the ninth floor. The others are locals at this time of day.

With this he abruptly turns his

back again. The CAMERA MOVES UP to Marsha's face. The smile persists, but she feels a sense of oddness in the attitude of the operator and a feeling of disquiet. There's nothing very concrete in her concerns. Nothing that could be articulated. CAMERA PANS over to the floor indicator with the little red and green lights that pop on and off as the car makes its ascent. Over this shot we hear the Narrator's Voice.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

Express elevator to the ninth floor of a department store carrying Miss Marsha White on a most prosaic, ordinary, run-of-the-mill errand.

Now the light hits number nine on the indicator. The elevator slows to a stop. The door slides open.

ABRUPT CUT TO:

10. MARSHA'S FACE

As she stares out at the floor.

**11. REVERSE ANGLE
LOOKING OUT**

Toward an absolutely empty and quiet department. Empty display cases, empty aisles, devoid of movement or sound or people.

OPERATOR

Ninth floor.

Marsha walks out tentatively, stands looking around, then whirls around, speaking as she does.

MARSHA

There must be some mistake.

There's no one up—

CUT TO:

12. ELEVATOR DOORS

Just as they close. Then a QUICK PAN UP to the floor indicator above the elevator doors as it starts its descent. PAN BACK to MARSHA'S FACE as she looks around, now very disquieted.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

Miss Marsha White on the ninth floor, Specialties department, looking for a gold thimble.

(a pause)

The odds are that she'll find it, but there are even better odds that she'll find something else because this isn't just a department store. This happens to be . . . the Twilight Zone!

FADE TO BLACK:

OPENING BILLBOARD
FIRST COMMERCIAL

FADE ON



**13. INT. DEPARTMENT
STORE NINTH FLOOR
TRACK SHOT MARSHA**

As she walks down a lonesome aisle, looking left and right, occasionally stopping to whirl around and stare behind her.

14. DIFFERENT ANGLE

As she stops by one counter and looks down.

**15. SLOW PAN ACROSS THE
GLASS**

Nothing is in it. PAN BACK UP to Marsha's face as she looks off in bewilderment. She turns and moves across toward the counters on the other side of the aisle.

**16. MED. LONG SHOT THE
COUNTERS**

These too have no merchandise in them whatsoever.

**17. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING
DOWN ON MARSHA**

As she pauses for a moment as if

trying to make a decision, then turns and walks back toward the elevators.

18. MED. CLOSE SHOT THE ELEVATORS

As she pushes the button, then steps back, waits for a moment, pushes the button again, this time with more persistence. She looks up toward the floor indicator. The arrow remains pointed to G.



19. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

As a look of concern crosses her face, nothing akin yet to panic, nothing that could be construed as even a fear. Just a carry-over of the disquiet of before and a suggestion of a growing irritation. Suddenly smashing into the silence is a woman's voice.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Was someone helping you?

20. DIFFERENT ANGLE MARSHA

As she whirls around, wide-eyed. Standing a few feet beyond her, alongside one of the empty counters, is a strikingly attractive woman in her early forties, her hair tied severely back in a bun, chic and tasteful in her dress, her voice modulated and pleasant. She looks a little amused at Marsha now.

WOMAN

Can I show you something?

MARSHA

(taking step toward her, a little flustered)

Why . . . why, yes. I was looking for a gold thimble. A gift for my mother.

21. CLOSE SHOT THE WOMAN

WOMAN

A gold thimble? I think we have something you'd like. This way, please.

She turns and walks to the other end of the counter. Marsha follows her.

22. TWO SHOT AT THE END OF THE COUNTER

As the woman reaches down behind the counter.

23. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

As her eyes follow her.

24. CLOSE SHOT THROUGH THE GLASS

Of a single gold thimble resting inside a small velvet box that is all by itself. There isn't another thing on display. We see the woman's hand lift it out and then put it on top of the counter.

WOMAN

How about this? It's fourteen-carat gold and quite distinctive-looking I think, don't you?

25. TWO SHOT

As Marsha picks up the small box and studies it, then looks up at the woman.

MARSHA

Yes. I think this will do.

WOMAN

(taking out an order book and a pencil)

This is a charge?

A silence as Marsha studies her.

WOMAN

(repeating gently)

Is this a charge, miss?

26. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

Suddenly shaken out of her day dreaming.

MARSHA

I beg your pardon? A charge?

No . . . no, I'll pay for it.

27. TWO SHOT WOMAN

(closing the box)

You want it gift wrapped?

MARSHA

Yes, please.

(then hurriedly correcting)

On second thought, no . . . I'll wrap it myself.

WOMAN

(scratches on a pad)

Twenty-two eighty, plus tax.

Twenty-five dollars even.

Marsha hurriedly takes out two bills from her wallet, hands them to the woman who immediately sticks them inside an order book.

28. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

As her eyes go down to look once again through the glass.

MARSHA

That's odd.

29. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP THROUGH THE GLASS AT THE WOMAN

As she writes out the ticket.

30. SAME ANGLE MOVING OVER TO MARSHA'S FACE THROUGH GLASS

WOMAN

What is, Marsha?

MARSHA

You don't have any merchandise here at all . . . except the thimble. Except the very thing I needed. The whole floor looks so empty and—

She stops abruptly.

CUT TO:

31. TWO SHOT THE TWO OF THEM

MARSHA

You called me Marsha.

WOMAN

(with a half-smile)

Did I? I'm sorry. That was forward of me. I apologize.

She takes a paper bag from a shelf behind and starts to put the small box into it.

MARSHA

How did you know my name?

WOMAN

I've probably seen you around the store—

MARSHA

(persistently)

No you haven't. I've never seen you. Look... I don't want to make a thing of this, but... what kind of a place is this? I mean... I want just one small item—a gold thimble—and I come up on a floor where there isn't a single thing in evidence except the very thing I'm looking for. Now you may be a little more sophisticated than I am, but this I call odd!

The woman keeps her back to her for a moment, then closes up the bag, turns to her, puts it on the counter.

WOMAN

Please come again.

(a pause)

Any time.

**32. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT MARSHA**

As she studies the woman.

**33. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT WOMAN**

34. TWO SHOT

MARSHA

(now just in a hurry to get away and nothing else, murmurs)

Thank you.

She turns, walk toward the elevator.

35. DIFFERENT ANGLE

As she arrives at the elevator and pushes the button. QUICK PAN UP to the floor indicator. This time the arrow starts to head toward the ninth floor.

**36. LONG ANGLE SHOT
LOOKING OVER
MARSHA'S SHOULDER**

The woman standing behind the counter.

WOMAN

Miss White.

Marsha turns to her:

WOMAN

(with great simplicity, very matter

of fact, as if commenting on the weather)

Are you happy?

MARSHA

I beg your pardon?

(a pause)

Am I what? Am I happy?

(she shakes her head, smiling at the strange non sequitur)

You'll forgive me, but... it's really none of your business.

**37. MED. CLOSE SHOT
WOMAN**

Who throws back her head and laughs.

WOMAN

Really? It's none of my business? All right, Miss White. Suit yourself. It's none of my business.

There's the sound of the elevator doors opening and they cause Marsha to whirl around to face them. The same young operator is at the controls.

OPERATOR

Going down.

Marsha hurriedly steps inside the elevator.

**38. LONG SHOT WOMAN BY
THE COUNTER
MARSHA'S POV.**

She stands there, with an enigmatic smile on her face which is shut off by closing doors.

39. INT. ELEVATOR

As it goes down. Marsha keeps studying the young man.

OPERATOR

Find what you were looking for?

MARSHA

(reaches into the bag and takes out the small box)

As a matter of fact, I did. Also as a matter of fact, that's the only thing for sale on that floor. Somebody better latch onto an efficiency expert or something. One entire department devoted to the sale of a single gold thimble. And an extremely oddball saleslady who somebody ought to look into!

40. CLOSE SHOT THE BOX

in Marsha's hand as she opens it and takes out the thimble.

MARSHA

This is scratched! I didn't notice that before. I can't send this to my mother. It's terribly scratched. And it's dented too! See here?

She proffers it to the operator. He keeps his back turned.

OPERATOR

Main floor.



MARSHA

Look at this thing. It's scratched and it looks like someone stepped on it or something.

OPERATOR

(noncommittally)

Main floor.

The doors open and Marsha, seeing that he refuses to even look at the thimble, shoves it back in the bag and flounces out of the elevator.

CUT TO:

**41. INT. MR. SLOAN'S OFFICE
(THE STORE
MANAGER) FULL
SHOT THE ROOM**

As he sits behind the desk. In front of him stands the floorwalker, Mr. Armbruster, a Franklin Pangborn type ultra-serious little man whose well-ordered life encloses nothing

but the department store, a fresh boutonniere, and a well-pressed suit. He's in the middle of a long explanation.

ARMBRUSTER

... well I distinctly told her that all the gold thimbles we have would be in Gifts. And that if the item were damaged we would certainly make it good either by replacement or refund. I distinctly told her that, Mr Sloan —



SLOAN

(very, very bored)

Then what's the problem, Mr. Armbruster?

ARMBRUSTER

The problem is that the customer claims she didn't get the item in Gifts. She got it in another department.

SLOAN

(lighting a cigarette, shakes his head back and forth with strained patience)

Then, Mr Armbruster ... have her go to the department where she purchased the item

ARMBRUSTER

That's the point, Mr Sloan. She has some idiotic story about having purchased the gold thimble on the ninth floor.

SLOAN

The ninth floor? I trust you explained to her, Mr.

Armbruster, that this store doesn't have a ninth floor?

ARMBRUSTER

(slapping his hands on the sides of his trousers)

Mr Sloan, believe me, sir, I have tried desperately — I really mean desperately — to acquaint her with this fact, but she insists she was taken up to the ninth floor, waited on by a rather odd woman — (then stopping abruptly and looking ceilingward)

An odd woman yet. A personality trait she would be particularly knowledgeable about! Well anyway, this woman who allegedly waited on her —

SLOAN

(rising somewhat tiredly)

Never mind, Armbruster. I'll talk to her.

ARMBRUSTER

(opening the door for him)

She's right outside, sir.

42. TRACK SHOT WITH HIM

As they walk through to anteroom and out into the store.

43. GROUP SHOT

As they approach Marsha, standing there waiting.

ARMBRUSTER

Miss White, this is our manager, Mr Sloan.

SLOAN

(smiles perfunctorily)

Perhaps I can help you, Miss White?

MARSHA

Perhaps you can. The thimble is dented and scratched —

SLOAN

(takes it from her, examines it) It most assuredly is. Now if you'll take it back to the Gift department —

MARSHA

(shaking her head from side to side)

Mr Sloan, I've already explained to Mr Armbruster here, I did not purchase this in the Gift department. I was taken up to the ninth floor.

44. CLOSE SHOT

ARMBRUSTER

As he gives Sloan a "see what I'm up against" kind of look.

45. GROUP SHOT

SLOAN

That's what's so difficult to understand, Miss White. You see, we don't have a ninth floor.

46. CLOSE SHOT

MARSHA

(firmly)

I was taken up to the ninth floor. I was waited on by a very odd woman. I paid cash.

ARMBRUSTER

Your receipt?

MARSHA

My receipt —

(she bites her lip, quietly)

I didn't get a receipt, but I paid cash. I gave the woman a twenty-dollar bill and a five-dollar bill.

(pointing to a package now in Sloan's hand)

I was given that thimble and I —

She stops abruptly, her eyes going wide. CAMERA SWEEPS right toward the object of Marsha's look.

47. MED. CLOSE SHOT

The back of a saleslady's head, the hair tied back in a bun just as before.

48. FLASH SHOT

MARSHA

There she is. It's the woman who waited on me.

(calling loudly)

Miss! Miss, I wonder if you'd —

49-51. SERIES OF CLOSE

SHOTS SLOAN, ARMBRUSTER, AND THEN MARSHA

As they look and react. SLOW PAN OVER to the back of the woman as she is suddenly lifted into the arms of a window dresser who turns with her and starts toward the camera. The woman is a mannequin. The face is a perfect replica of the woman we've seen, but is nonetheless a mannequin.

52. TRACK SHOT

As the window dresser carries her past Marsha and the others then ZOOMAR into a close shot of Marsha as her mouth half opens as if to scream.

53. MOVING CLOSE SHOT MANNEQUIN

As it is carried toward the window, the face wooden, immobile with a painted smile.

FADE TO BLACK

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE ON:

54. INT. DEPARTMENT STORE GROUND FLOOR DAY (EARLY EVENING) MED. CLOSE SHOT THE FACE OF THE MANNEQUIN

Who was the saleslady. It's been set up in a ladies wear section which is directly across from the ladies lounge. PAN SHOT from the face over to the door of the lounge. Mr. Armbruster paces fretfully back and forth in front of the door. A young salesgirl comes out.

ARMBRUSTER

Well, well, well? How is she?

SALESGIRL

She'll be all right, Mr.

Armbruster. She was just frightened, that's all.

ARMBRUSTER

(with a surreptitious look left and right, inches closer to the girl, almost sotto)

What about this . . . this delusion of hers?

SALESGIRL

I don't know. I didn't talk to her, but she's resting now. I think she may have gone to sleep.

A gong rings and Armbruster looks up toward a large clock on the wall.

55. CLOSE SHOT CLOCK

It reads six o'clock

56. TWO SHOT

Armbruster takes out a pocket watch and checks it.

ARMBRUSTER

Well, tell her we're closing now. And tell her to come back tomorrow and we'll get a replacement on her merchandise . . . or a refund . . . or anything she wants.

(then wiggling a finger to someone across the room)

All right, Miss Pettigrew! (he claps his hands together) Closing up time.

(another look at the salesgirl)

What I'd like to give her is a bus ticket, a one way bus ticket to any department store west of Cleveland, preferably Chicago, Los Angeles or Honolulu!

(then he moves away, calls out)

Miss Pettigrew, did you hear me? Closing time.

The salesgirl turns and starts toward the door; to the ladies lounge, has her hand on the knob ready to open it.

VOICE (OFF)

Miss Keever's, you have a customer. Hurry please.

The salesgirl once again puts her hand on the knob, then looks up at the clock, then turns away from the door and moves off left.

SALESGIRL

I'm coming.

The CAMERA PANS UP to the clock.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

57. CLOSE SHOT CLOCK

It reads 6:35. The lights have been turned off in the store and only a few night lights remain. PAN DOWN for MED. CLOSE SHOT, the door.

CUT TO:

58. INT. LOUNGE

Marsha lies on a couch sound asleep. She awakens abruptly, blinks her eyes, then bolts upright. A small night light is on, providing the only illumination in the room. It outlines the door.

59. MOVING SHOT WITH HER

As she jumps up and runs toward the door, opening it wide.

60. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD HER FROM THE STORE

As she stands in the doorway and is gradually aware that she's left alone in the store.

61. MOVING SHOT WITH HER

As she walks down the center aisle leading toward the front door. She stops abruptly at the sound of gongs which are immediately intruded upon by the chimes of a clock. She reaches



the front doors, yanks on them, then knocks, then calls out to no one in particular:

MARSHA

Please . . . someone? I'm locked in here!

(she pounds on the door again)

Anyone? Could I have some help please?

She waits a moment in silence, then turns and studies the room, looking for another exit.

62. TRACK SHOT WITH HER

As she walks back down the aisle slowly looking down at her feet.

63. CLOSE SHOT HER FEET

They send out a sharp click, click, click of high heels on wood. Then they stop. PAN UP TO HER FACE as her eyes move left and right, listening intently. She starts to walk again.

**64. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT HER FEET**

As they continue to click, click, click along the floor and once again they stop.

**65. DIFFERENT ANGLE
MARSHA**

As she stands stock still and then very, very slowly turns to stare at something behind her.



**66. REVERSE ANGLE
LOOKING TOWARD
MANNEQUIN**

It remains in its position, one hand on hip, the other spread out in typical model form. Around the wrist of the extended arm is a small handbag.

**67. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT MARSHA**

As her eyes go wide.

**68. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT HANDBAG**

Very slowly, almost imperceptibly, it seems to swing back and forth.

**69. DIFFERENT ANGLE
MARSHA**

As she whirls around and runs down the aisle, continually looking over her shoulder to see if she's being pursued.

**70. DIFFERENT ANGLE OF
HER**

As she runs.

71. PAN SHOT UP TO SIGN

Which reads: Men's Department

CUT TO:

72. MED. LONG SHOT OF HER

As she races toward the camera, veering slowly to the left as she gets closer.

CUT TO:

73. DIFFERENT ANGLE

As a figure of a man seems to loom onto the screen from the right. Marsha hits it head on, knocking him over.

**74. FLASH SHOT
MANNEQUIN**

As it lands stiffly on the ground, hitting the back of its head.

**75. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT MARSHA**

Reacting.

**76. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT
MANNEQUIN**

This is the face of the young elevator operator who took her up to the ninth floor.

**77. DIFFERENT CLOSE
ANGLE MARSHA**

As her hands go to the sides of her head and involuntarily she shakes her head back and forth as if rejecting everything she's looking at.

78. CLOSE SHOT HER FEET

As once again she runs in the opposite direction, then the feet suddenly stop.

**79. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING
UP AT HER FACE**

As like some frightened child, her head jerks to various different positions of listening and watching. From someplace far off, unintelligible is the sound of a giant whisper.

VOICE

(off)

Marsha...

80. TIGHT CLOSE SHOT

As she turns in that direction.

VOICE

(off, from opposite side)

Marsha...

81. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

She whirls around toward this direction.

SEVERAL VOICES

(with the same whispery quality)
Marsha?

82. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

As she turns this way and that way.

VOICES

Marsha.

CUT TO:

**83. TILT SHOT WOMAN
MANNEQUIN**

84. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

As she recoils.

**85.-88. SERIES OF TILT SHOTS
OF VARIOUS OF THE
MANNEQUINS**

Each shot coinciding with a whispered voice.

VOICES

Marsha?

Who do you think you're fooling, Marsha? Come on, dear... climb off it. You remember, Marsha? You know who you are.

**89. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING
DOWN AT MARSHA**

As she backs away from the voices of the mannequins.

90. CLOSE SHOT

As she backs into the saleswoman mannequin.

**91. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING
UP TOWARD
MANNEQUIN MARSHA'S
POV**

**92. REVERSE ANGLE
LOOKING DOWN ON
MARSHA'S HORRIFIED
FACE**

She continues to back away.

CUT TO:

**93. SHOT THROUGH GLASS
PHONE BOOTH**

Of Marsha as she backs into it, lets out a little gasp, turns, sees the phone, enters the booth, picks up the receiver.

**94. CLOSE SHOT COIN
SLOTS**

**95. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT MARSHA**

As her eyes close. She suddenly realizes she has no coins. Wildly, illogically, she jiggles the hook up and down. Over her shoulder we see the saleswoman mannequin in the same place.

**96. DIFFERENT ANGLE
MARSHA**

Very close to the phone as she replaces the receiver. She looks up slowly and her eyes go wide again.

**97. ANGLE SHOT OVER HER
SHOULDER**

The spot where the saleswoman mannequin was is no longer occupied.

**98. ZOOMAR THROUGH THE
GLASS OF THE PHONE
BOOTH**

To where the mannequin was.

**99. REVERSE ANGLE
MARSHA**

As she pushes the phone booth door open and rushes out, pushed and prodded by a directionless fear. She winds up alongside the elevator doors and almost concurrent with her arrival there, the doors of one elevator slide open. Without thinking, she runs inside.

100. INT. ELEVATOR

Marsha has moved to the opposite side of the elevator and stands in the corner; her face buried against the wall, eyes closed tightly.

**101. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT SIDE OF
HER FACE**

Her hand covering her eye. Suddenly she hears the sound of the door behind her slice shut and the low, steady hum of the elevator as it ascends. Very slowly she turns as if expecting to see someone operating it.

**102. REVERSE ANGLE
LOOKING TOWARD THE
BUTTON PANEL**

Alongside the door where the

operator usually stands. No one is operating the elevator.

**103. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT THE
PANEL**

As the light flashes at each floor: Six, seven, eight, and on up.

**104. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT MARSHA**

As she stares at the board intently.

**105. EXTREMELY TIGHT
CLOSE SHOT THE
BOARD**

The lights go past eight and on up to nine, then stop.

**106. REVERSE ANGLE
LOOKING TOWARD
MARSHA**

As she slowly looks up, her face white, tense.

**107. REVERSE ANGLE THE
DOORS**

As they very slowly slide open. The floor beyond the open door is a vast dark emptiness. Marsha steps into the frame from behind the camera and out of the elevator. Almost immediately lights go on and she's looking into a semicircle of faces of men and women, each dressed in specialized fashion, sportswear, skiing, bathing, etc. In the front stands the saleswoman, now as flesh and blood as we first saw her. They look at Marsha with a kind of collective pitying smile, not unfriendly or menacing, but hardly a welcome smile either.

WOMAN

Well, Marsha dear, you'll forgive an observation... but you're acting like a silly child.

108. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

Her eyes dart around, looking at each of the faces.

MARSHA

What... what are you... why am I...?

**109. REVERSE ANGLE
LOOKING TOWARD
SALESWOMAN**

WOMAN

Come now, Marsha, think now. Concentrate.

(a pause)

Remember now? All of us will try and help you. We'll help you concentrate.

**110. PAN SHOT PAST THE
FACES OF THE PEOPLE**

Each nods. The PAN ENDS ON MARSHA as she shakes her head from side to side and on the last motion stops abruptly. Her eyes go up, then look away.



111. GROUP SHOT

WOMAN

Remember now? Coming back to you?

The people behind her nod encouragement.

**112. MED. CLOSE SHOT
MARSHA**

As she slowly nods along with them.

MARSHA

Why... that's odd. That's really odd. But suddenly I do seem to—

WOMAN

(filling it in for her)

Remember? Coming back now, is it?

114. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

This information is said more to herself.

MARSHA

Why, I'm... I'm a mannequin.

That's what I am. I'm a mannequin. And it was my turn to—

115. CLOSE SHOT THE WOMAN

Smiling very contentedly now.

WOMAN

Your turn to leave us for a month. Becoming much



clearer now, isn't it? You left us for a month and lived with the outsiders. But you were due back yesterday and you didn't show up.

(gently reproving now)

And you know, Marsha, that's selfish, my dear. All of us wait our turn and we simply do not over-stay it. It was my turn starting last night. I'm one day delayed already.

MARSHA

(softly)

Of course. Of course, I'm sorry. I forgot. When you're on the outside everything seems so... so normal, as if—

ELEVATOR OPERATOR

As if what, Marsha?

116. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA

MARSHA

As if we were... like the others. Like the outsiders.

(a pause)

Like the real people.

117. GROUP SHOT

The woman steps forward and puts an arm around Marsha.

WOMAN

Well, my dear... no serious harm done.

(she pats her arm gently and crosses in front of her over to the elevator door)

I'll see you all in a month. Take care of yourselves.

CHORUS OF VOICES

Have a nice time.

Enjoy yourself. See you in a month.

118. MED. LONG SHOT ELEVATOR DOORS

As they open. The woman smiles and waves and walks inside. Then the elevator doors close and we hear the hum as it descends.

CAMERA DOLLIES BACK in for a MED. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA as she stares toward the elevator.

ELEVATOR OPERATOR

Enjoy it, Marsha? Was it fun?

MARSHA

(nods slowly, in almost a whisper)

Ever so much fun.

(a pause, then her eyes go down)

Ever so much fun!

119. PAN SHOT OVER AND UP TO THE FLOOR INDICATOR

Over the elevator doors as the arrow reaches G.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

120. THE SAME INDICATOR

PULL BACK for LONG ANGLE SHOT of the department store's first floor and the hustle and bustle of mid-morning. We see Mr. Armbruster walking up and down the aisles, snapping fingers, giving orders, finding faults.

121. DIFFERENT ANGLE EYE LEVEL

Down one aisle as he walks toward the camera. The CAMERA PULLS BACK as he walks toward it until just a part of a female mannequin from the back can be seen on one side of the screen.

122. CLOSER MOVING SHOT ARMBRUSTER

As he walks full face into camera,

stops, looks thoughtful for a moment, then turns to look behind him.

123. CLOSE SHOT MARSHA'S FACE IN MANNEQUIN FORM

She is in the place formerly occupied by the saleswoman mannequin, dressed identically, with her hair in the same bun.



124. FULL SHOT THE AREA

As Armbruster turns back to face the camera. Still the little quizzical, thoughtful look, then he shrugs and makes a face and continues to walk down the aisle. The CAMERA STARTS A SLOW PULL UP from the shot until we're looking down on Marsha as a focal point in the room.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

Marsha. White, in her normal and natural state. A wooden lady with a painted face, who, one month out of the year, takes on the characteristics of someone as normal and as flesh and blood as you and I.

(a pause)

But it makes you wonder, doesn't it? Just how normal are we? Just who are the people we nod our hellos to as we pass on the street. A rather good question to ask... particularly in The Twilight Zone!

FADE TO BLACK

THE END 12

